PC GAMEPLAY

THE PC GAMES MAGAZINE YOU CAN TRUST

INCORPORATING

PC GAMING WORLD

DVD EDITION

EXCLUSIVE PLAYTEST!

C&C

EVERY WEAPON, VEHICLE AND BUILDING REVEALED!

RENEGADE

GET UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH COMMAND & CONQUER!

FIRST REVIEW!

GRAND PRIX 3

2000 SEASON

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE?

WE CUT THROUGH THE HYPE!

MAX PAYNE

WORTH THE WAIT?

REVIEW MELTDOWN!

CODENAME: OUTBREAK
STAR TREK: ORION PIRATES
STAR TREK: DOMINION WARS
ARCANUM
FLY! 2

EXCLUSIVE DETAILS & PICTURES!

STUNNING FIRST SCREENS!

HUNTING SEASON IS OPEN!

HITMAN 2

HE'S BACK FOR ONE MORE JOB – AND YOU'RE ON THE HIT LIST!

BLACK & WHITE 2?

CREATURE ISLES

RULE THE PLANET – AGAIN!

LATEST WORD ON: ALIEN vs PREDATOR 2 - F1 2001 - WORLD WAR 3 - ANNO 1503

MAX PAYNE™

EVERYTHING RIPPED APART IN A NEW YORK MINUTE... MAX PAYNE IS A MAN WITH NOTHING TO LOSE IN THE VIOLENT, COLD URBAN NIGHT. A FUGITIVE UNDERCOVER COP FRAMED FOR MURDER, AND NOW HUNTED BY COPS AND THE MOB. MAX IS A MAN WITH HIS BACK AGAINST THE WALL, FIGHTING A BATTLE HE CANNOT HOPE TO WIN. PREPARE FOR A NEW BREED OF DEEP ACTION GAME. PREPARE FOR PAIN...

MAXPAYNE.COM

Chronicles of Pern

DRAGON RIDERS

Dragonriders: Chronicles of Pern is a 3rd person, single player epic adventure game based on **Anne McCaffrey's** popular Dragonriders of Pern series of novels. For the first time, **Anne McCaffrey's** world of Pern is brought to life with beautiful 3D graphics. Playing as D'kor, the player will explore over 120 different locations, gain important skills and interact with over 170, allied and enemy, non-player characters through conversation and combat.

Based on
Anne McCaffrey's
DRAGONRIDERS
OF PERN

Ubi Soft
ENTERTAINMENT

Dreamcast.

PC
CD
ROM

HITMAN 2 **010**

CHARACTER ASSASSINATION The dangerous-to-know number 47 is back in the area for yet more acts of merciless murder. Flick to page 10 for more.
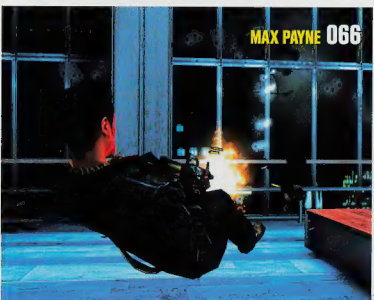

COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE **032**

TARGET RENEGADE For all the latest info on the development of this potentially awesome first person shooter, take a look at our special report on page 32.

CREATURE ISLES **038**

CREATURE FEATURE "I just don't think this is going to work out. I'm really sorry." Head to page 38 for the real story behind this mildly unsettling screenshot.

MAX PAYNE **066**

THE PAYNE BARRIER Read our exhaustive review on page 66 of the most high-profile PC release of the summer. Trust us, this is the only verdict you need!

contents

reviews

The drawn-out death of summer can only mean one thing: it's time to return to your PC. We've got an eclectic mix of games this month, from the frantic Max Payne to the cerebral Orion Pirates.

ON THE CDs & DVD!

PLAYABLE DEMOS
MECHCOMMANDER 2
ALONE IN THE DARK 4: THE NEW NIGHTMARE
WORLD WAR 3
CLUSTERBALL
WARBIRDS 3
ZAX: ALIEN HUNTER

MOVIES
ARCANUM
FIFA 2002
PC GAMEPLAY NEWS

PLUS MUCH MORE! FLIP TO PAGE 124 FOR MORE DETAILS!

SOLUTIONS

Is Blue Shift giving you a bad case of the blues? Stuck up to your neck in mech? Fear not, for help is at hand in the shape of PC GAMEPLAY's essential pocket-sized Guide Book. We'll soothe your blistered fingers and ease your thumping headache with hints and complete solutions for:

Mechcommander 2
I-War 2
Alone in the Dark 4
Operation Flashpoint

Half-Life: Blue Shift
Grim Fandango
Emperor: Battle for Dune
PLUS MUCH MORE!

DVD MOVIES

Each DVD contains high resolution movie previews and reviews.
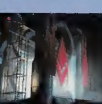
■ FIFA 2002
The ageing FIFA series gets a long overdue makeover!

■ GRAND PRIX 3 2000
Play spot the difference with this F1 expansion.

■ ARCANUM
Still not sure? Take a look at Arcanum in action.

CONFLICT ZONE™

ENTER THE REAL TIME STRATEGY WORLD OF CONFLICT ZONE TO FACE REAL LIFE, PRESENT DAY,
WAR CONSTRAINTS AND ARMY UNITS, FIGHTING FOR PEACE, OR TERRORIST FACTIONS.

IT'S YOUR MODERN WAR

A BRAND NEW AI SYSTEM

★ **DirectIA®** engine, used in the military industry, offers variable gameplay within repeated missions while individual units show human-like learning abilities. Damn, it's alive !

★ For the first time in an RTS, delegate key tasks to your dedicated Commanders, allowing complex multi-site battles.

★ Computer opponents adapt to your strategy and gaming experience to give you the ultimate in gameplay satisfaction.

ORIGINAL GAMEPLAY

★ Real-time 3D-rendered environment allows you to observe the action from any gaming position you choose.

★ Media feedback of your conflicts, good and bad, impacts civilian popularity and ultimately your resources – this is real life propaganda.

★ Control either the International Corps for Peace or GHOST, offering 2 very different, real-life, gameplay strategies.

Ubi Soft entertainment

MASA

www.conflictzone-thegame.com
Releasing soon on PS2 and Dreamcast

PS2 PlayStation®2

Dreamcast

PC CD ROM

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR 2 036

ALIEN RESURRECTION Strap on your grenade launcher and storm page 36 for the low-down on another potentially huge first person shooter headed your way.

F1 2001 044

WINNING FORMULA We take a spin in Electronic Arts' latest incarnation of its annual slice of hi-octane Formula One fun. Can it overtake the mighty GP3?

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 01-02 056
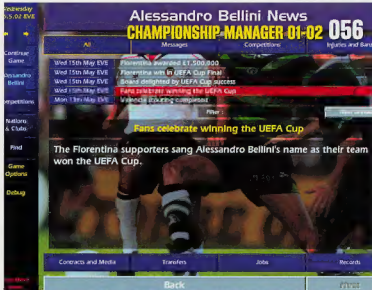
A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME Or just more of the same? Check out our in-depth preview on page 56 for all the news on this heavily anticipated expansion pack.

RED FACTION 058

RED LETTER DAY Yet another game with pretensions of toppling Half-Life from its perch strolls into the PC GAMEPLAY offices. We weigh up its prospects on page 58.

global

News of three big name sequels is sure to bring a smile to the face of any self-respecting PC owner this month. And if it's info on another episode of the Sims you're after, we've got that too!

previews

We've got hands-on previews of the hottest incoming games peppering your short-term radar this September. Heads up!!

regulars

Reviews of the latest online games can be found in our expanded Netplay section, along with the latest hardware news on page 110.

features

In the wake of Max Payne, the Big Issue this month asks whether the average PC game is giving you value for money?

HIGHLIGHTS

THE UNDERWORLD: CRIME DOES PAY
Life on the other side of the tracks exposed in this brutal gangland title. Exclusive details on page 13.

DEUS EX 2
What does Mr Spector have up his sleeve for the sequel to the best game of last year? Page 20 to find out.

WORLD WAR 3
A good ole slice of real-time strategy coming right up on page 46.

WIN!

Five Vivid! XS cards are up for grabs, courtesy of the kind people at Videologic. Turn to page 116 for more details.

welcome

the truth revealed

WELCOME!

Despite rumours that it didn't exist, the four year development of Max Payne was finally concluded late last month. Since then - Black & White aside - it has become the most successful PC game of the year with over 30,000 hard drives already labouring under the weight of its install. But for those who haven't already succumbed to the allure of Max, the review on page 66 makes for an interesting read. PC GAMEPLAY's rigorous review process reveals that it's by no means all that it's cracked up to be. A good game with awesome visuals, yes. A great game, no. And with a mere 12 hours needed to finish it, the old value for money debate is inevitably reignited, more of which on page 24. Max isn't the only 3D shooter to make an impression this month. The exclusive playtest of C&C: Renegade confirms expectations that it's going to be an extraordinary experience. Let's just hope it lasts more than 12 hours.

EDITOR j o n   e v a n s
ON HIS PC: Championship Manager 01-02

DEPUTY EDITOR will sargent

With Max Payne here at last, we asked our staff for their definition of maximum pain. For Will it was simple – being forced to play flight sim add-ons for four days solid while the baking hot sun beat down on his window. And guess what we made him do...
ON HIS PC: Max Payne, Flight Simulator 2000

GAMES EDITOR darren evans

For our Daz, there's no such thing as a maximum level of pain. You see Mr Evans will gladly subject himself to 24-hour games marathons that bring him nothing but agonised tears of frustration. We all wear earplugs to escape his potty-mouthed tirades.
ON HIS PC: Mechcommander 2, Max Payne

STAFF WRITER jonathan todd

Toddy's idea of maximum pain is the prospect of his beloved Darlington FC ever losing to Torquay, the team supported by our esteemed editor. When those two giants of the modern game come together, the PC GAMEPLAY offices become embroiled in civil war.
ON HIS PC: Championship Manager 01/02

STAFF WRITER jon brown

Rather obviously, 'Leather' Brown's idea of maximum pain would be having his hat removed in a public place. If you've seen Darth Vader without his helmet on, you've got a pretty good idea of what lies beneath that woollen shield. Or is he just bald?
ON HIS PC: Max Payne, Anachronox

DISC EDITOR daniele gotti

Dan's pain threshold is directly linked to the remaining space on his closely guarded PC GAMEPLAY server. Hence, once the server is full ("Blady 'ell!!"), Dan experiences the maximum level of pain possible for an adult male. Hear his terrifying scream!
ON HIS PC: Mechcommander 2

SENIOR DESIGNER curtis phillips-cozier

Curtis experiences an intense shot of maximum pain once a month, usually around deadline, when the weight of 130 pages of raw copy is dumped on his desk and we all bugger off home. He's only been here for three months and we've almost done him in.
ON HIS PC: Outrun, Real Pool

WE'RE MEN (AND WOMEN) ON A MISSION: TO PRODUCE THE BEST PC GAMES MAGAZINE YOU'VE EVER READ. AND THIS IS HOW WE PLAN TO DO IT...

you can trust our reviews

Between them, the PCG boys have years of games reviewing experience. You can trust their hype-free reviews to tell it exactly like it is because they answer to no-one except you, the reader.

the best CD-ROMs and DVDs

Every issue you get two FREE CD-ROMs or a DVD packed with the very finest playable demos, exclusive video previews of hot upcoming games, stacks of patches and upgrades and much, much more.

the biggest exclusives

If you want to read about the best games first, look no further. Over the last few months we've brought you the exclusive first look at Civilization 3, Unreal 2 and Age of Mythology.

we're passionate about games

We love playing PC games as much as you do, and take huge pride in producing the very best PC games magazine every month.

we've got the best solutions

Only we have a crack department of talented writers and designers dedicated to researching and producing the most authoritative tips and solutions around – you won't find better game help.

BE SEEING YOU!
Next month's PC
GAMEPLAY is
in the shops
20th September
Don't miss it!

Everyone playing games with a 56k modem put your hands up.

HIT OR MISS? The main criticism of the first game was the inconsistent artificial intelligence. Sometimes you could shoot a guard in full view of enemies but because you were in disguise it took them a long time to react. Thanks to a full save game function, the love it or loathe it trial and error structure of missions is a little easier to take.

BULLET TIME

A TASTE OF THE ACTION IN HITMAN 2

WHY '47' WANTS A NORMAL LIFE IN HITMAN 2. ▬

When Eidos signed Hitman 2, due next year, we tracked down lead designer Jacob Andersen...

/ WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HITMAN SINCE WE LAST SAW HIM?

The game starts in quite an untraditional way at a small monastery in Sicily. After the massacre and the weird experience with the clones in the basement of the lunatic asylum at the end of the first game, Hitman has fled and now tries to figure out who (or rather, what) he is. He has put down his weapons and spends most of his time in the herbal garden of the monastery. Father Vittorio, a priest, has spent months with Hitman in the confessional chair. Father Vittorio is the only person Hitman can connect with, and the former assassin sees him as family. You could say you won't get far into the game before Hitman is tempted to go back to his old profession.

/ HOW DO YOU WRITE THE STORY?

As for the original Hitman we have a professional writer attached to make 'corrections', so the story doesn't get as confusing as we game developers sometimes make it.

/ IS THERE A QUICK SAVE FUNCTION?

We had a lot of complaints about the lack of a save game function in the first game. Hitman 2 will have a full save function, but we might limit it to a certain number of saves per mission like in Soldier of Fortune.

/ GIVE US AN EXAMPLE OF HITMAN'S NEW HOMICIDAL METHODS.

How about an interesting scene where he dresses up as a surgeon to make sure a heart operation on a mafia boss goes wrong? We focus on the need to make killings as precise as possible without damaging innocent civilians or being caught.

/ WHAT PERSPECTIVE IS HITMAN 2 PLAYED FROM?

A lot of gamers would like to be able to play Hitman as a first person shooter, so we will incorporate this into the PC version where the perspective is best for sharpshooting. On Xbox and PlayStation 2 you still control Hitman in the third person because that's the best solution when you use a gamepad.

/ IS THE SAME TEAM WORKING ON THE SEQUEL?

Partly. We have hired a couple of foreigners, among which is a very skilled 3D graphic artist from

Canada. It is pretty hard attracting foreign labour because of the high taxes in Denmark, but there are a lot of very talented here, so we are doing just fine.

THE MUSIC WAS IMPORTANT IN HITMAN. WHAT TYPE OF SCORE IS USED IN HITMAN 2?

As in the first game the soundtrack is written by Jesper Kyd who is known for electronic music like techno and trance. We have asked Jesper to compose a classical score with a twist of his own personal sound. He is now working with a music arranger and it is to be recorded by the Radio Philharmonic Orchestra in Budapest. The orchestra has more than 60 musicians and a choir of 50 singers. The first demos we have heard are impressive.

/ HAVE YOU HAD ANY REQUESTS ABOUT THE LICENSE FOR A HITMAN MOVIE?

Yes, there have been some, but the best proposal was to make a TV series like The X-Files.

CHOPPERS More helicopter trouble for '47'. Remember the exciting first mission in the original on the rooftops?

CLONING Like the original, '47' must don a series of disguises to avoid detection. The bald head is still a giveaway.

COUNT 'EM The sequel features four to five times as many polygons as Hitman. That's better graphics to you and us.
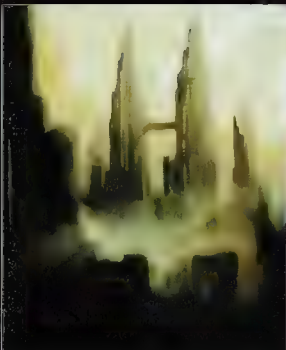
FOGGING Atmospheric, smoke-filled streets obviously feature heavily. This is the near-future, remember?

SLIP STREAM

■ Now, don't get confused when we tell you, Electronic Arts is creating games based on The Lord of the Rings film trilogy. Vivendi's already making games based on the books, the first being The Fellowship of the Ring next year but because changes have been made to the books for the movie, the licensing rights are completely different. Glad we sorted that out.

■ Activision will develop and publish all future Star Trek games thanks to a ten-year agreement with Viacom. The deal includes games based on the tenth film and Enterprise the forthcoming TV show. The company is also creating a series of games based on Steven Spielberg's Minority Report starring Tom Cruise. The film is a futuristic thriller based on a short story by sci-fi author Philip K. Dick, he of Blade Runner and Total Recall fame, and opens in the UK late next year.

■ Gremlins and the spin-off Ghostbusters cartoon are returning in game form after French publisher Wanadoo acquired the official licences.

■ Eidos' next batch of budget titles under its Premier Collection banner is the strongest yet: Deus Ex, Tomb Raider Chronicles, Three Kingdoms: Fate of the Dragon and Chicken Run are released in October.

■ Robot Wars: Arenas of Destruction is activated in November, based on the cult BBC2 show.

■ The creator of the hugely influential X-COM is back with Laser Squad Nemesis, another squad-based strategy www.asersquadnemesis.com has two early screenshots.

■ CDV displays its eye for dark horses with the publishing rights to Neocron, a massively multiplayer online roleplay game due in November which boasts around 60,000 registered fans.

ORGANISED CRIME ■NEWCOMER■

LOCK, STOCK AND ALL GENRES IN THE UNDERWORLD: CRIME DOES PAY.

When a game describes itself as a fully 3D real-time strategy/3D shooter which includes significant role-playing game elements, you know you're in for either something rather special or a potential disaster.

Underworld places you in charge of a small crime group with the aim of expanding your influence on the streets. You must hire and train your thugs, strategically deploy your men around the city to cause maximum damage, and combat both rival gangs and the law.

At any time you can switch from a Gangsters 2-style view to a first person perspective and take on enemies directly. If you choose otherwise the game determines the outcome of specific objectives which vary from bank robberies and extortion to gambling and spying.
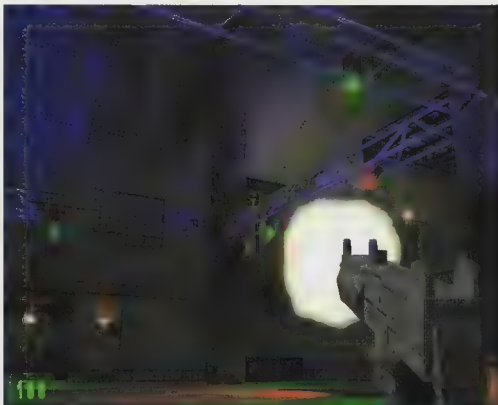
NIGHT FEVER Warehouse and run-down apartments play a big part in The Underworld, but you also move outdoors onto the city streets as well as visiting landmark buildings such as sports stadiums.

ROOM WITH A VIEW There's an economic side to the game as you try and maximize revenues.

TAKE A SEAT Each thug possesses unique skills, weapons, specialities, and equipment.

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

WHAT HAS LEGO GOT IN STORE FOR FANS THIS AUTUMN?

■ LEGO Creator Harry Potter
■ October
■ www.lego.co.uk
■ Build furniture for Hogwarts Castle
■ Design train track for the Hogwarts Express
■ Create minifigure pupils
■ 2 optional challenges
■ Down bad new bricks and virtue modes
■ Pupils react differently to students from other schools

■ LEGO Bionicle: The Legend of Mata Nui
■ September
■ www.lego.co.uk
■ Third person action for older LEGO fans
■ 6 playable heroes
■ 12 elemental powers such as creating earthquakes
■ Over 20 levels

FORCE-FUL ■UPDATE■

MANY BOTHANS DIED TO BRING US THIS INFORMATION ON STAR WARS: GALACTIC BATTLEGROUNDS.

We admit to having severe doubts over Ensemble's attempts to 'do' an Age of Empires in the Star Wars universe. Memories of Force Commander played in our heads like a bad pop tune, and the initial scale of units made some characters almost as big as AT-ATs. Now we've seen the game in action we're feeling a whole lot better.

Like AoE, there are four resources: food, carbon, ore, and nova. With each civilisation governed by a formidable tech tree and distinct units, their importance can't be underestimated.

Subject to change both the Rebel Alliance and Royal Naboo have excellent Mech units, the Empire boasts the strongest naval force, The Trade Federation is superb in the air, and both Gungans and Wookies produce great Jedis. It's fantastic watching AT-ATs stomping around while Gungans fend off stormtroopers, all accompanied by a terrific music score.
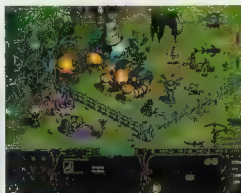
CLICK ME The interface and keyboard hotkeys are almost identical to those in Age of Empires.

DETECTION Jedi remain invisible until converting or attacking units. But Bounty Hunters *can* see them...

DO YOU REALLY WANT TO SAVE NABOO? NEWCOMER

Autumn ■
Activision ■
www.lucasarts.com ■

SLIP
STREAM

STAR WARS: STARFIGHTER IS *ANOTHER* CONSOLE PORT.

LET'S EXERCISE Flight training missions are available to try from each character's point of view.
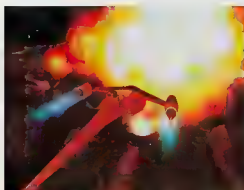
FIRE WALKER 14 environments and over 20 starships make up the Starfighter universe.

FLYING LOW Flying Naboo craft just doesn't do it for us. We can't decide if it's the appalling Episode One movie or just their basic design that puts us off. Still, this sequence looks pretty exciting

T he last Star Wars conso.e-to-PC conversion was Battle For Naboo, a mind-numbingly awful Rogue Squadron hand-me-down featuring none of the charm of the original trilogy but plenty of The Phantom Menace's listlessness.

Okay, so a return to Naboo in Starfighter doesn't exactly set our pulses racing n quite the same way as Jedi Knight 2. And yes, controlling craft from Episode One isn't exactly the same as swooping around in the Millennium Falcon.

What you do get are three pilots housing a personal vendetta against the Trade Federation. There's Rhys Dallows, a cocky pilot-in-training in an N-1 starfighter equipped with proton torpedoes, laser cannons, and deflector shields. Then there's Vana Sage, a gun for hire in the Guardian which sports stealth capabilities, sensors, and tracking devices. And let's not forget Nym, an

alien pirate who pilots the Havoc which boasts bombs, lasers, a rotating turret gun, and heavy shielding.

Missions begin on Naboo, climaxing in an assault on the Droid Control Ship where you battle against over 50 vehicles, including Trade Federation drop ships, battle tanks, droid

starfighters and never before seen craft such as the deadly Protector, Scarab and Dagger Bonus missions and a couple of two player modes mean this might not be the straight conversion we've come to loathe

So with all this firepower at our disposal, does anyone know where Mr Binks is...?

RING OF FIRE Let's hope the three conflicting characters aren't too off-puttingly moody or cliched.
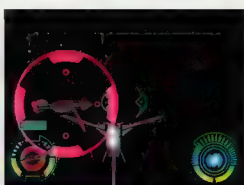
SPOT THE DIFFERENCE Looks a little similar to Rogue Squadron and Battle For Naboo, doesn't it?

Get yourself connected A selection of every launched game watch in

aliens vs. predator 2
If only this was as spooky as the game itself

comanche 4
Not much content but nice wallpaper to decorate your desktop

conquest: frontier wars
Extremely detailed with a forum for clans.

il-2 sturmovik
Lacking at the moment apart from new screenshots

internal rain
A brief story overview and tons of screenshots
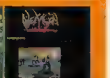
nexagon: the pit
Overview, features list and downloadable wallpaper

SLIP STREAM

■ Four Terminator games are in development at Infogrames. The first is set in the past and post-apocalyptic future while the Terminator 2 games continue the story but include additional characters and elements.

■ Despite promising a media blackout, Arithmetic Studios has launched a website at www.bloodrunsdeep.com for W.A.T.E.R. The game is a first person perspective action/strategy set when the world's water supply has run out. Thirst is quenched in 2003.

■ Internal Pain is a promising first person 3D shooter set on a future world where something Very Bad is happening. Playing one of four allied races, the game boasts 99 unique ways of making it to the end, 39 levels, and even changes in your character's appearance as the story progresses. Plenty more at www.internalpain.sk.

■ Tron returns as a 3D shooter, tying in with a planned film sequel. Monolith is reportedly trusted with bringing the 1982 movie to 2003 life.

■ What if you couldn't kill the world's most dangerous criminals because they store vital technological info in their bodies? nWrap poses this question and puts you as part of a team sent to capture enemies alive using submarines, fighters, hovercrafts, and spaceships. Find out more at www.agdsoft.com

■ Three arcade classics are resurrected soon by Infogrames: Sub Way and Mini War on Osborne and the Futurist: Tanks of Conflict in memory.

■ Valve has prematurely handed the development team of Counter-Strike: Condition Zero over to Gearbox Software.

■ Soldier of Fortune: Platinum Edition contains the Gold Edition, the 1.07f patch, five multiplayer maps, the official strategy guide in PDF format, and footage from the even bloodier sequel.

DON'T MENTION THE WAR `NEWCOMER`

IRON STORM IS HISTORY...BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT.

MR MUSCLE Judging by the amount of lead letting hardware on this special agents back you might have thought he'd have a can of 'bathroom foam' to solve this situation. What situation? The bloody filthy bath, mate. Yeuch! That cleaner must have died years ago

Imagine what the world would be like if The Great War hadn't ended in 1918. That's the fascinating 'what if?' premise at the heart of Iron Storm, a first or third person perspective 3D shooter.

The unique alternate history game world in which battle-weary Allied and German troops still wage a futile and seemingly never-ending war from their mud-flooded trenches is divided into two fighting empires: the Eastern empire, from Russia and Mongolia up to Eastern Europe, and the Western Empire, which covers Western Europe and America. You play a US soldier.

Although the weapons are more powerful than those used by soldiers in WW1, it's still pretty lo-fi. In fact, the game has an intriguing retro/steampunk feel to it, with clanking, chuntering machine guns rat-a-tat-tatting leaden death at the enemy the use of stealth is critical to survival. As always, we'll keep you posted. Though not, you'll be relieved to hear, to the front line.
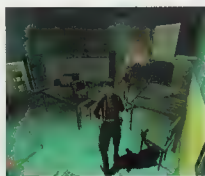
THE THIRD MAN The game will run in first and third-person modes

PITCH BLACK `NEWCOMER`

SIMPLE PLEASURES IN DARK ORE.

Although it's inspired by the NASA space station program of all things, Dark Ore probably has the most basic description attached to it. The objective: be the first player to accrue $100 million. And that's it.

Even the means by which you achieve this goal are simplistic. The idea is to use a starter ten million kitty to build a space station, adding generators, factories, docking stations and weapons. Once it's built, you have to defend it.

Minerals needed to ship to Earth are gathered near four rival space stations, who naturally don't take too kindly to you prowling their territory. Fortunately each weapon has a counter-measure, so planning for your opponent's firepower is the key to victory.

You can also hire mercenary ships to collect resources on your behalf, setting them individual or group parameters such as attack direction and when to return to base.
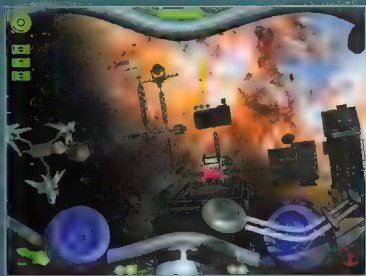
SPACE TYCOON Build a £10m space station. Defend it. Make £100m as soon as possible. Game over. Simple. You're being attacked by the way.

Medal of Honor

Hidden & Dangerous 2
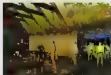
Prisoner of War

Iron Storm

Return to Castle Wolfenstein

Grom

FANTASY

INCOMING'S INCOMING `UPDATE`

INCOMING FORCES RAIDS YOUR WALLET THIS XMAS.

A direct sequel to the original action/strategy game Incoming, 'Forces is set 20 years on and neatly reverses roles. Well, if Arnie can get away with changing sides in Terminator 2... Anyway, instead of protecting Earth from an alien invasion, you play the head of the ET's defence force, now on the back foot and fighting off a human attack.

There are four detailed planets you must protect using over ten controllable craft ranging from gunships, fighters, bombers, and tanks to an escape pod, armoured carriers, laser and missile turrets, and assault robots using alien technology.

The further you get in this 21 mission campaign, the more options are unlocked for the shoot-'em-up arcade mode which lets you pilot any craft in any of the worlds.

It's hard to tell the real difference between the modes given neither is particularly brain-taxing. Arcade fans in the PC GAMEPLAY office are expecting a non-stop shooty thrill ride not dissimilar from its predecessor, with big locales, even bigger guns and some crazy horseplay jumping between vehicles.

As mindless entertainment goes you'll be hard pushed to find something better in Santa's sack.

IF LOOKS COULD KILL More of a console blaster than a traditional PC click-em-up, Incoming was a gorgeous beast. Its sequel, shown above, looks to be carrying forward the visual theme
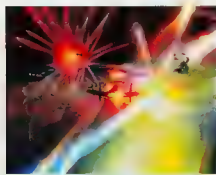
GAMEPLAY SCHMAMEPLAY The Incoming universe is all about spectacular explosions.

UPWARDLY MOBILE Hit the thrusters and take to the skies. But watch the fuel levels.

BURN BABY BURN Planet Inferno is red and glowing, and full of explosions.

TRIGGER FINGERS Up to four players can wear out fire buttons in split-screen multiplay.

COMPUTER BATTLESHIPS `NEWCOMER`

FILL YOURSELF WITH DREADNOUGHTS AT THE THOUGHT.

FIREPOWER Dreadnoughts are armed with cannons, anti-grav drives, and ion shields.

FOOT PATROL The best way to destroy a Dreadnought is to capture the outposts

A 3D shooter set in the future Hmm, sounds familiar. But a 3D shooter combined with a space simulation? That's more like it.

The game is currently a multiplayer for up to 32 gamers and takes place on a behemoth of a spaceship known as a Dreadnought. As a crew member the emphasis is on coop play whether you're the commander managing the ship's energy systems and directing

assaults on other Dreadnoughts, or an engineer employed as Mr Fix-it

Battles also occur on the ground across a series of energy-producing outposts which can be captured and then defended. With warrior, assassin, siege warrior, scout, sniper and ranger as the other five character roles, Dreadnoughts certainly isn't shying away from comparisons to Tribes 2. Heck, you even use jetpacks!

SLIP STREAM

■ Last month we incorrectly reported the publisher for Moto Racer 3 was Infogrames when in fact it's Electronic Arts. Apologies for any embarrassment caused.

■ November sees the re.ease of NASCAR Heat 2002, featuring all the official drivers, tracks and cars from the 2001 Winston Cup season. Apart from the usual single race and championship modes, Beat the Heat mode drops you into over 36 scenarios from NASCAR competiti on. Head to head and 32-player multiplayer complete the challenge.

■ Master Rallye is based on the off-road competition of the same name, comprising eight countries and 42 courses. Instead of the narrow tracks favoured by other rally games, MR's wide driving circuits are based on archive data from previous Rallyes and, apparently, the official course designer. Expect this one at the end of October.

■ With more race options and features than most, Rally Championship Extreme also shouldn't have too many problems finding its own niche in the overcrowded rally genre. This time you compete in the 36-stage British Rally Championship choosing from an impressive pool of cars. A downloadable file called Professional Driver Data also lets you compete against a real driver's racing style.

TOCA LOOK AT THIS! NEWCOMER

Spring 2002 ■
Codemasters ■
www.codemasters.com ■

ALL CHANGE FOR TOCA RACE DRIVER.

How do you take a successful series of racing games and turn it into something new? We'd say keep the on-track action, and enhance the graphics and game mechanics. But how does a character and episodic narrative with both glamorous on and off-circuit developments grab you?

The driving elements remain – the cars, teams, tracks and drivers are based on the real thing, and the engine is given the predictable overhaul to feature a damage system which accurately recreates high-impact collisions – it's just that you now play the character of Ryan McKane, a test driver who must work his way up the championship ladder to become the most famous race driver in the world.

There are various plots regarding rivalries between McKane and his racing colleagues and a storyline concerning his fiercely competitive family who have a rich heritage in motor racing.

We're not quite sure how it'll work out, but so long as it mirrors the lifestyle of Eddie Irvine in some small way, everyone should be happy

LOW PROFILE RACER Unlike the racing tyres on this baby, the new TOCA is all about anything but being low profile. An Xbox-inspired 'career' mode brings a twist to the formula. We're confident of a PC GAMEPLAY Gold.

GREEN GODDESS Thanks to its console links, expect some fantastical machines to take racin'.

FAMILY MAN Make your racing family proud by winning your way to the championship final.

BURN RUBBER UPDATE

October ■
Activision ■
www.activision.com/games/supercar ■

200MPH RACING IN SUPERCAR STREET CHALLENGE.

If there's one thing we'd like to do it's to race a supercar. Imagine the thrill of going in excess of 200mph, accelerating from 0-60mph in under four seconds, the smell of petrol... er, at least we can now get much closer to the real McCoy.

With input from manufacturer Steve Saleen,

SSC's biggest asset is the Styling Studio. Here you can design your car using sliding scales to change the shape of car parts. Compressing or stretching them influences factors such as aerodynamics and it all looks very slick.

The confirmed car list is a racing fanboy's wet dream: the Lotus M220, Callaway C12, Fioravanti F100, Pagani Zonda C12s, Vision CTEK K/2, Bertone Pixster, Rinspeed E-Go Rocket, Saleen's S7, and Pontiac Concept GTO, with six of these also available as alternative speedier race versions.

CRAZY RACERS We've only heard of the Lotus, but who cares when you can build and trash 'em all.

FULL FRONTAL The developer should use its remaining time to improve the replays. That is if it wants to take on the mighty Gran Turismo 3.

BLUE SKY AT NIGHT Lens flares and sunrises are the new balloons and helicopters of race games.

WHO'S THE DADDY?
- 9 VEHICLES
- 6 BONUS CARS
- 23 COURSES
- 7 CITIES
- 5 GAMER MODES
- LAN MULTIPLAYER FOR UP TO
- 10 ADD-ON CAR PARTS
- 9 SETS OF WHEELS
- 4 CAMERA VIEWS

FURIOUS FUHRER NEWCOMER

LOSING THE PLOT IN 1946-HITLER'S REVENGE.

Xmas ■
Victory Simulations ■
www.acefury.com ■

L ike Iron Storm on page 14, this is another 'what if?' game focusing on a World War. Apparently its historical fact that Hitler could have turned WW2 around if a secret peace treaty with Stalin had gone ahead. And if German scientists had had time to perfect and produce the next generation of aircraft and rockets. All ifs and buts.

As Captain Ace Fury it's your job to stop the invasion. Depending on your performance the story and odds of success change, and after flying over 100 missions for the Allies you can even switch sides.

KNIGHTS OF THE SKY Cpt. Chuck Yeager, Col. Dick Bong, and Cpt. Bud Anderson are your wingmen.

SKATE TO VICTORY UPDATE

NO HALF-PIPE MEASURES IN TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3.

November ■
Activision ■
www.activisiono2.com/tony_hawk/ ■

A lthough these screenshots are taken from the PlayStation version due in autumn, you can expect the PC port to look pretty similar.

At any rate it features exactly the same roster of pro skaters trying to look 'street' in baggy clothing. Elissa Steamer, Jamie Thomas, Steve Caballero, Rune Glifberg, Geoff Rowley, Andrew Reynolds,

Rodney Mullen, Eric Koston, Chad Muska, Bucky Lasek, Kareem Campbell, Bam Margera, many of whom are returning from the first two games.

An expanded career mode includes more character-specific goals, but we reckon most of you will be satisfied pulling off over 100 slick tricks and combos.

YOU'RE RUBBISH! More interaction with pedestrians, traffic, and other skaters is promised across the nine levels. Well, if pointing means interaction...

SKATER'S ISLAND An expanded multiplayer means up to four players can show off their skills, or bail painfully, in Trick Attack and Graffiti play modes.

WHAT THE OTHER MAGS SAY... JUST HOW DO OUR REVIEWS COMPARE WITH OTHER MAGS?

	TRAIN SIMULATOR	DIABLO 2: LORD OF DESTRUCTION	SHOGUN: THE MONGOL INVASION	BALDUR'S GATE 2: THRONE OF BHAAL
PC GAMEPLAY	"It's a unique experience, and you'll have a limited amount of enjoyment with it" 7/10	"It improves the game's longevity, but this is the inherent nature of the original's chapter-seeding system" anyway" 6/10	"Adds just enough strategy and diversity of units to lift the package above accusations of being a 'lazy cash in'" 7/10	"An expansion packs go this is an excellent example of how it should be done properly," 8/10
PC ZONE	"As train simulators go, this is as comprehensive a package as you could ask for" 80%	"Is it really worth shelling out £19.99 for? The answer is a resounding yes" 83%	"For more access able and with a game as incredible as this, that can only be a good thing" 83%	"A flourishing finish to the Children of Bhaal saga and one that won't disappoint fans of the series" 82%
PC GAMER	"Spans the gap between train aficionado and hardcore gamer with satisfying authenticity" 88%	"Undoubtedly a stronger game, executed with trademark Blizzard class and attention to detail" 89%	"Sega ever gaming's never had it so good. The future is here, so stand up and take note" 95%	"A satisfying ending to a brilliant series told to a challenging, exciting and rewarding" 91%

SLIPSTREAM

■ Yur's Revenge, the Red Alert 2 add-on, features over an hour of FMV sequences for the singleplayer campaigns, with the entire cast back for more blue screen thesping.

■ Far West takes up the Desperados wild west theme early next year, with you playing a rancher looking to expand your farm. Rival farmers, Indians and wolves stand in your way, but you can hire cowboys for protect on See the feature on page 60 for more information.

■ Cloning, mind control, time travel and the ability to summon oriental heroes are a few features of Impact of Power, a game still without a publisher.
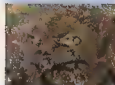
NAPOLEON RETURNS `NEWCOMER`

FACE YOUR WATERLOO IN EUROPA UNIVERSALIS 2

I f history and strategy are your 'thang' we've got some cool news. It's a hard fact of life successful games get sequels, so fanfares at the ready everyone. We liked this historical slice of RTS action first time around, and hopefully broadening the scope of the game way beyond the original stage of Europe should make EU2 even better. Now you can control any nation in the world – that's over 180.

The original's time-frame is also expanded by 100 years to incorporate both the Hundred Years War and the whole of the Napoleonic Era.

Dusty old history professors with delusions of grandeur are in for a treat.

BARGAINING POWER Persuade neighbouring countries to commit to neutrality, and demand or offer combinations of gold, provinces and diplomatic agreements as a result of peace.

STAND AND DELIVER Mercenaries bolster your defences and missionaries convert infidels.
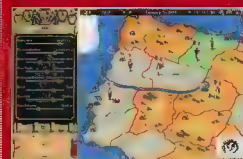
MAP IT OUT A scenario editor increases the game's lifespan beyond the 1419-1820 campaign.

UP SEA SHANTY `NEWCOMER`

ALL HANDS ON DECK FOR SEA DOGS 2.

S ea Dogs sank without trace in the UK, lost in some publishing wrangle. So it's good news for the sequel that EON has snapped up both games

A strange brew of strategy, action and role-playing, the objective is to guide your small ship and crew around 25 fictional islands. Play comes in two modes, walking and sailing.

On foot, you travel around ports and their buildings, taxing items and interacting with computer-controlled characters. On deck, you're in full control of the ship's steering, sails and artillery

The role-play aspect is focused at the start when selecting your captain persona. His attributes and set parameters affect ship control, boarding actions, trading operations, character interaction, and, of course, how golden his crispy fishfingers are

CABIN CREW
It's a good idea to get to know prospective allies first

Sammy Inchmail: Secrets: An informer for the pirate Kebrada Kostillas.

Camilo Machado: Secrets: Holds great power over smuggling on the islands.

MATHISE KLUSENER: Secrets: Knows the real truth behind island rumours.

ANDRI BUCHON: Secrets: Cheats customers out of their money.

PORT SIDE Towns consist of taverns, stores, churches, town halls, merchants, sailors, guards, smugglers, officers, prostitutes, and drunks. A good night out.
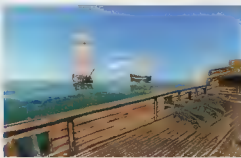
EXOTIC Search each island carefully and you could stumble across treasure caves and smuggler's lairs.
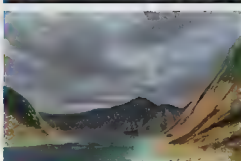
ALL ABOARD Characters can give info or join quests but you have limited control over them.

THE DATING GAME   `NEWCOMER`

SAUCY GOINGS-ON IN THE SIMS: HOT DATE.

The House Party expansion couldn't have been any more lacklustre and uninspired if it tried. Which is why we're approaching Hot Date with only limited optimism.

Unsurprisingly, it allows your Sims to experience the joy and pain of dating other Sims. To this end the pack features a new Downtown area to explore, boasting restaurants, bars, parks and a host of other places conducive to wining, dining and 60... er... entertaining potential life partners.

And once they've finally harassed someone enough to give them a chance, new interests and interactions help keep the chemistry clicking. Sims can flirt, play footsie, kiss, gossip or simply chat although, sadly, there isn't an option to cop a quick feel.

New Sims to meet and greet include the Jock, the Femme Fatale, Mr Medallion and the Blonde Bombshell, as well as over 100 new objects such as the Picnic Basket, Cuddle Couch and Love Tub.

It sounds like a lot of fun, and given our abysmal success rate with the opposite sex it could provide plenty of handy hints on how to make real-world dates go with a bang, in every sense.
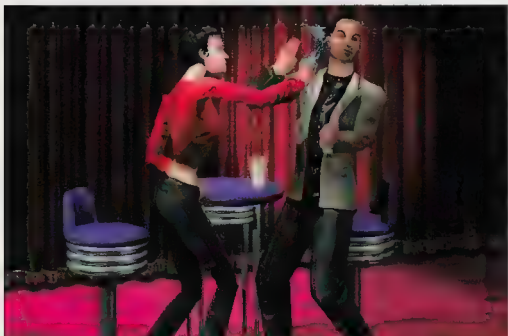
SINKING FEELING A typical example of the way dates work out for most of the PC GAMEPLAY team. Actually that's a lie, because you have to find a willing date in the first place. Better luck next time pal.

SLUURRRP Up to 12 items can be carried on a date and given as gifts. It's obviously worked here.

TREKKERS UNITE   `UPDATE`

DON'T FLY SOLO IN STAR TREK: BRIDGE COMMANDER.

After previously indicating the game won't come with any multiplayer, Totally Games has now confirmed five multiplayer modes: deathmatch, team deathmatch, Federation vs. non-Federation, starbase attack and defend, and the oddly named turkey shoot. Four people can play over the internet and eight via LAN.

The two deathmatch modes are your standard 'blow as many things up as possible' games, while the starbase mode is self-explanatory.

Federation vs. non-Federation pits Akira, Ambassador, Galaxy and Sovereign craft against similar ilk in the Cardassian, Klingon and Romulan fleets. Turkey shoot mode is a race against time to see how many computer controlled ships you can destroy.

STARRY EYED By the time this game arrives, it'll be Scott Bakula on Enterprise you'll want to play as, and not Picard or Data. Everyone's bound to ignore what they say anyway and take total control of bridge stations.

SHAKY It's worth suffering a little damage just to see crew members get thrown from their seats.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

BRIDGE COMMANDER is the first space sim set in the Next Generation universe (Picard, not Kirk), where you must discover the cause of an explosion from the sun and prevent it from happening again. Over six mission find you fighting the Cardassians, allying with the Klingons and investigating the Romulans, while an arc story reveals a plot to overthrow the Federation.

BEG, BORROW, STEAL NEWCOMER

THIEF 3. PINCH US PLEASE.

T he Thief 3 development team is more secretive than Garret himself, but we managed to prise away a few snippets of information. Pre-production is now complete, leaving the code to be written and missions to be built, with the interface, player movement and AI making good progress. In fact, Garret is able to move, sneak, hide in shadows, and even shoot arrows.

Terrific use of sound once again plays a massive part in helping to create tense situations. Guards patrol, see, hear and search for Garret, sometimes coming out with lines like 'must have been rats'. Louder noises also mask quieter sounds such as footsteps.

As for story details, Garret's lifestyle and profession are the main focus, but the secretive Keeper organisation is revealed in more depth. Thief 3 introduces the Pagans, reclusive worshippers of a nature deity known as the Trickster. They operate from abandoned courtyards and hidden sanctuaries, meaning more missions occur in city alleys and back streets.

TOWERING Already you can see Thief 3 retains the dark, gritty feel of its predecessors

SECRETS This is the Keeper organisation at one of their meetings, learning how to pose enigmatically.

FINDERS KEEPERS No, this isn't Garret, but Artemis a Keeper. Most concept art was drawn by Dan Thron, the artist who made the Thief and Thief 2 cut scenes.

SOUL MAN NEWCOMER

VAMPIRIC SHENANIGANS IN SOUL REAVER 2.

L ike a stake through the heart, Soul Reaver 2 plunges you back into the role of tortured vampire soul Raziel immediately after the first game, searching for his lost father Kain.

Building on the entertaining, if frustrating original, this version allows you to 'plane-shift' between worlds and introduces time-travel to the mix. Combat is an increasingly important part of the game with an improved range of enemies and weapons.

Raziel now has over 30 new abilities to learn, many of which are tied to the elemental themes of Dark, Light, Spirit, Earth, Fire, Air and Water. A console classic, but can it take advantage of the PC's capabilities?

MIXED BAG Raziel faces spectral enemies, warrior-priests, demons, vampire hunters, cultists and undead warriors.

HARD TO SWALLOW Now you begin with the Soul Reaver, as well as abilities like soul devouring acquired from the original.

DICKY TICKER'S MONTH IN VIEW

HI SPORTS FANS! IT'S ALL SYSTEMS GO WITH OUR BOYS OVER IN GERMANY Y'KNOW, YOU CAN LOOK AS COOL AS ME WITH A LICK OF PAINT.

HEART RATE
AUG/SEP

AUG 24
SHOGUN: THE MONGOL INVASION
Disappointingly delayed by a month, we guarantee this will be worth the wait in the end

AUG 31
MADDEN NFL 2002
Would you believe the Madden series is in its 12th year?

AUGUST 31
A KNIGHT'S TALE

SEPT 1
GERMANY VS ENGLAND
Crunch time for Beckham and the boys and a chance to see how good we really are after the drubbing Mexico

 ## TOTALLY UNREAL `NEWCOMER`

 ### THE UNPRONOUNCEABLE DEUS EX 2.

ION Storm Dallas has closed and you're tired of dealing with stupid console-first rumours. So what do you do to cheer yourself up? Luckily for us the friendly chaps at ION Storm Austin released the very first concept art for the sequel to one of the finest games of all time.

Deus Ex 2 uses Epic Games' next generation Unreal engine, and if you've been following our Unreal 2 coverage you'll know this is a very good thing indeed. Characters express a wider range of emotions, and although JC Denton returns in trademark trenchcoat, you can play as a sassy new female character.

The main improvement we'll be looking for is more open-ended gameplay, with the original occasionally pushing you into situations from which there was only one escape. It's a delicate balance between giving the player choice and showcasing a strong narrative.

It will be interesting to see how the story picks up from Deus Ex. After all, three endings were available so a little artistic license might be required to avoid a clumsy prologue.

ROBOT WARS This is similar to the original's military bot, but now you can run between its legs.

ORDER, ORDER The Order is a religious organisation introduced in the sequel. This is a temple of theirs in an old refinery. A higher object density than the first game means you can expect to see some stunning locations. Even at this early stage of development we're already impressed with concept renders.

SEPT 3 — THE RUNNING MAN DVD

SEPT 3 — THE STROKES 'IS THIS IT'

SEPT 7 — FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

SEPT 7 — DRAGON'S LAIR 3D

SEPT 14 — KOHAN: IMMORTAL SOVEREIGN

SEPT 20 — DRUUNA
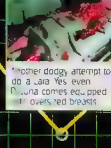
SEPT 20 — PC GAMEPLAY ISSUE 17 Perhaps by this time we might see the likes of Commandos 2. Then again.

SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL
The enemy troops now have heightened senses and can hear and see your commando team members more easily. Stealth is now more essential than ever.

TANK RUSH
Panzer tanks litter the game's many levels. Here they're being driven by the Germans, but with stealth and guile it's possible to commandeer them for your own use.

COMBAT READY
Although they look harmless here, your characters can be put into attack mode with a click of the mouse. They will then attack anyone who enters their field of vision.

COMMANDOS 2

To help pass the time until the eagerly-awaited Commandos 2 finally appears, here's an extraordinary screenshot from the game. The shot (in stunning 1 280x1 024 resolution) comes straight from the game and shows a wide-angle view of the action. In the finished version you will be able to steal and drive the German tanks, although here they are being steered by the enemy. The developer is currently removing the last remaining bugs and fine-tuning the play balancing. The game should be firing its way into shops at the end of September. Hopefully.

NEW YORK. FUGITIVE UNDERCOVER COP. NOTHING TO LOSE.

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

"IS THE GAME TOO SHORT?
IN A WORD, YES.
PC GAMEPLAY CLOCKED IN
AT 11 HOURS 23 MINUTES"

NOT CROSS   A MAN WITH NOTHING TO LOSE   DO NOT CROSS   A MAN WITH

MAX PAYNE ™

REMEDY ™
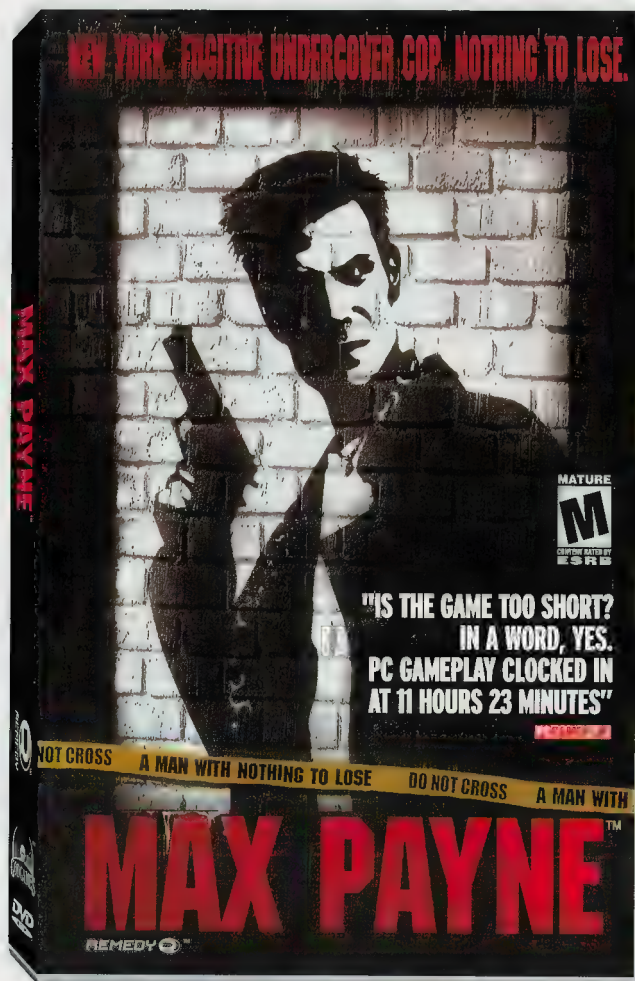
With the panic surrounding
the length of time it takes to
complete Max Payne, we
investigate whether PC
gaming offers value for
money compared to other
leisure pursuits and which is
more important – quality
or quantity?

After suffering countless setbacks,
delays and, worst of all, rumours that
the project had been canned, the
loyal contingent of Max Payne
devotees on the 3D Realms forum had every
reason to be excited by the prospect of finally
getting their hands on the game they'd lusted
over for more than four years

Until, that is, a fateful day in July, when our
website (www.pcgameplay.co.uk) broke the
news that maybe Max Payne was, to put it
mildly, a touch on the brief side

Further rumours that the game was as short
as 10 hours provoked an uproar on the forum
and led to an official reply from 3D Realms
stating that the real figure was closer to 25
hours. We've since played the game and
completed it in around 11 and a half hours, for
the hardcore player that's a single weekend, for
everyone else probably a week at most

But the issue here isn't just Max Payne – if
you're after more info on that, check out our
comprehensive review on page 66 – it's
whether PC games in general are offering
value for money in terms of the amount of
entertainment they provide

**But how can you measure the time it
takes to complete a game?
I've got Civilization 2 on my hard drive
and I play that all of the time.**
Obviously, measuring the length of a game is
not an exact science. Some players rush
through games on a mission to complete every

THRILLS PER PENNY We put six leisure pursuits to the test to calculate their hourly
costs and find out how much entertainment they provided.

**PC
(Max Payne)**
COST £34.99
LENGTH 15 HOURS
COST PER HOUR
£2.33

**Cinema
(Jurassic Park 3)**
COST £5.90
LENGTH 1.5 HOURS
COST PER HOUR
£3.93

**PS2
(Onimusha)**
COST £39.99
LENGTH 7 HOURS
COST PER HOUR
£5.71

ARE GAMERS BEING RIPPED OFF ?

the BIG issue

WORDS jon brown

evel in the quickest possible time (mainly so they can brag on forums about their gaming prowess) whereas others prefer to explore each and every area fully to get their money's worth. And then there's the question of replay value, network play and downloadable mods.

For the purpose of our investigation, we discounted these factors and concentrated on how long it takes a competent player to complete the average single player game from start to finish and compared that to other forms of entertainment to see if PC gamers were paying disproportionately for their jollies.

Of course we are! Compared to watching films, playing games is an incredibly expensive hobby. Plus, we have to pay more for our games than gamers do in the United States

That's certainly true. Let's take the example of Max Payne, which went on sale in the United States at $44.99 – a saving of around a fiver compared to the UK price. But you're wrong if you think that playing games is more expensive than other forms of light entertainment. Take a look at our table and you'll see that PC games offer unrivalled value for money in comparison to other leisure pursuits. Even the lightweight Max Payne, which charges around £2.33 for an hour's entertainment, is far better value than any of the other entries in our poll.

Games such as Baldur's Gate 2 and Deus Ex prove that PC gamers really are a lucky bunch in comparison to football fans and moviegoers.

WE FOCUSED ON HOW LONG IT TAKES A COMPETENT PLAYER TO COMPLETE THE AVERAGE SINGLE PLAYER GAME FROM START TO FINISH

interestingly enough, the average PC game also worked out to last longer than the average PlayStation 2 game. The short-lived gem Onimusha is the worst offender with a miserly eight hours of gameplay for a competent player.

So it's not all bad. And what about online games? I paid £20 for Quake 3: Arena and I've had thousands of hours out of that.

The thing to remember here is that while you might only be paying a small cost for the software, you have to take into account the cost of a telephone call, the line rental and the charge to the internet service provider. And that's another reason why gaming is more expensive in the UK than it is in the United States.

Most large towns and cities in the United States have free local calls – and hence free internet access – as standard. Services such as BT's Yesmate in the UK offer unlimited internet access after 6pm and all day at weekends for a monthly charge of £9.99 or total access anytime for £25.99, but that's still far more than your typical US gamer pays. What's more, it seems likely that the developers of the next generation of online multiplayer games will be forced to charge gamers a monthly subscription fee in order to offset the costs of setting up servers and hiring the staff to maintain the system.

World War 2 Online, the hugely ambitious combat sim reviewed on page 102, offers the first month free, but will then charge players a

further $9.99 (roughly £7.00) a month to play, on top of the cost of the software. But with a game of that scope, the number of hours of gameplay is literally unlimited. If this approach is adopted by mainstream developers, not just those involved in RPGs, it will mark a major shift in the PC games market, although it's impossible to say how gamers will react to this new method of paying for their software.

There's sure to be a majority of PC owners who will resent paying for a game once and then having their account drained on a monthly basis just to keep on playing it, but with the huge success of Ultima Online and Everquest, it seems certain to become a purchasing concept that gamers are going to have to get used to quickly.

So even though PC games offer unrivalled value for money, you're telling me that these days could be coming to an end?

It's certainly a possibility. But ultimately this whole question comes down to whether you want quality or quantity. Developers still commonly mistake a game's length for its difficulty, and make games horrendously hard in order to prolong its shelf life, rather than go to the expense of designing a couple of extra missions. And though Max Payne only lasted us 11 hours, we probably experienced more enjoyment in that brief period than we would if we played Gangsters 2 or the Tomb Raider Chronicles from now until the day we die.

DVD (Me,Myself & Irene)	CD (Travis)	Football (Arsenal)
COST £19.99	COST £12.99	COST £34.99
LENGTH 2.1 HOURS	LENGTH 0.9 HOURS	LENGTH 1.5 HOURS
COST PER HOUR £9.52	COST PER HOUR £14.43	COST PER HOUR £22.00

CHARTS

HERE'S A FULL RUNDOWN OF THE MOST POPULAR GAMES YOU ARE PLAYING *NOW* – INCLUDING WHAT'S HOT IN THE OTHER TWO BIGGEST GAMES-PLAYING COUNTRIES – AND A TOP FIVE LIST OF TODDY'S MOST WANTED, WHICH ARE (HOPEFULLY) COMING SOON.

UK TOP 20

The best-selling PC games in the UK - week ending July 28, 2001

1 N
Train Simulator
■ Simulation ■ Microsoft
An incredible number one, given the niche content and £50 asking price. But we never really doubted its pulling power, promptly awarding it a well-deserved seven out of ten.

2 N
Operation Flashpoint
■ Action ■ Codemasters
One of the finest games of the year to date might not have strong multiplayer option yet, but just wait for the upgrade packs.

3 N
Baldurs' Gate 2: ToB
■ Adv & RPG ■ Interplay
Just misses out on the highest new entry spot thanks to Operation Flashpoint, but it has beaten it's arch nemesis Diablo 2.

4 N
Diablo 2: LOD
■ Adv & RPG ■ Vivendi Universal
Lord of Destruction storms into the top four, but it's pipped to the post by the new Baldurs' Gate 2 add-on.

5 N
Half-Life: Generation
■ Action ■ Vivendi Universal
Yet another Half-Life spin-off storms into the top ten. This double pack contains the original game and the excellent add-on Opposing Force.

6 ▼3
The Sims: House Party
■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts/Maxis
It hardly represents value for money, even hardcore Sims fans just can't help themselves Look out for Simsville and The Sims Online.

7 -
The Sims
■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts/Maxis
The Sims' grip on the charts shows no sign of letting up, thanks to its wide-ranging appeal and originality. Is virtual life better?

8 ▼2
Black & White
■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts
The biggest game of the year keeps slipping after a lengthy spell at the top, but the long wait was still worth it.

9 ▼6
Champ Manager 00/01
■ Sport ■ Eidos Interactive
The daddy of football management games drops yet again. But expect to see it in the charts for quite a while yet.

10 ▼4
Cossacks
■ Strategy ■ CDV Software
The popular Cossacks slips for the second month. But fans will be pleased to hear that there's an add-on pack in the works.

11 ▼1
Emperor: Battle For Dune
■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts
Essentially Command & Conquer in 3D, which is probably why it's done so well. But it is us ten places after just one month at the top.

12 ▼11
The Sims: Livin' It Up
■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts/Maxis
Just like The Sims, Livin' It Up is guaranteed a long shelf-life thanks to the same quirkiness and wide ranging appeal.

13 ▲4
The Sims: The Sims: Livin' It Up
■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts/Maxis
A Sims game in the top 20 is a certainty these days, and this double pack keeps Livin' up around.

14 N
ICC Ashes Edition: 2001
■ Sport ■ Empire Interactive
We can't see the one sticking around for too long given England's disastrous Ashes campaign so far.

15 N
Sudden Strike Forever
■ Strategy ■ CDV Software
One of the few add-on packs to do justice to the original. Let's hope Warcommandos continues CDV's RTS success.

16 R
Diablo 2
■ Adv & RPG ■ Vivendi Universal Publishing
The old warhorse keeps dipping in and out of the top 20, buoyed by the release of Lord of Destruction.

17 R
Tomb Raider: Chronicles
■ Adv & RPG ■ Eidos Interactive
What possible reason could there be for the return of Lara Croft and her tomb raiding exploits?

18 N
Alone in the Dark 4
■ Adv & RPG ■ Infogrames
A millennial makeover for Carnby propels everyone's favourite ghostbuster into the top 20.

19 ▼10
Gangsters 2
■ Strategy ■ Eidos Interactive
Despite it not actually being very good, the opportunity to play a gangster is too great for some.

20 ▼19
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2
■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts
The strategy has been dumbed down a little in favour of high-octane action, but we love it anyway and you obviously do too.
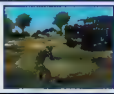
HOW IT WORKS

11	Position this month
▲**15**	Position last month
	Movement
▲	Moving up
=	Same position
▼	Moving down
N	New entry
R	Re-entry

ChartTrack

Thanks to ChartTrack
These charts are supplied by ChartTrack, the best source of sales information in the UK entertainment software market

US Top 10

Operation Flashpoint isn't released until September. If you're wondering why it's absent from the US charts, Maxis is taking advantage of the add-on's success and creeps back up.

1	N	**Diablo 2: Lord of Destruction** ■ Adv & RPG ■ Vivendi Universal Publishing
2	▼1	**The Sims** ■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts
3	▼2	**The Sims: House Party** ■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts
4		**Myst 3: Exile** ■ Adv & RPG ■ Ubi Soft
5	-	**Black & White** ■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts
6	-	**The Sims: Livin' Large** ■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts
7	▲8	**Rollercoaster Tycoon** ■ Strategy ■ Hasbro Interactive
8	▲10	**Diablo 2** ■ Adv & RPG ■ Vivendi Universal Publishing
9	N	**Train Simulator** ■ Simulation ■ Microsoft
10	N	**Half Life: Blue Shift** ■ Action ■ Vivendi Universal Publishing

US chart supplied by Compute US

German Top 10

The Diablo 2 add-on achievement at Baldurs Gate to the number one spot. Elsewhere there's a few surprises for once in the shape of GP3 and Diablo 2.

1	N	**Diablo 2: Lord of Destruction** ■ Adv & RPG ■ Vivendi Universal Publishing
2	▼1	**Operation Flashpoint** ■ Action ■ Codemasters
3	N	**Baldur's Gate 2: ToB** ■ Adv & RPG ■ Interplay
4	R	**Formula One Grand Prix 3** ■ Driving ■ Infogrames
5	R	**Diablo 2** ■ Adv & RPG ■ Vivendi Universal Publishing
6	▲7	**Half-Life: Blue Shift** ■ Action ■ Vivendi Universal Publishing
7	▼6	**Emperor: Battle For Dune** ■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts
8	R	**Counter-Strike** ■ Action ■ Vivendi Universal Publishing
9		**Train Simulator** ■ Simulation ■ Microsoft
10	▼9	**The Sims: House Party** ■ Strategy ■ Electronic Arts

German chart supplied by PC GAMES

TODDY'S TOP FIVE

Our resident sports and driving expert Jonathan Todd lists the five games that he is prepared to sacrifice barbecues and sunshine for

1	**Unreal 2** ■ Action ■ Infogrames
2	**Medal of Honor** ■ Action ■ EA
3	**Championship Manager 4** ■ Sports ■ Eidos Interactive
4	**Commandos 2** ■ Strategy ■ Eidos Interactive
5	**Star Wars: KotOR** ■ Adventure/RPG ■ Activision

Next month!
Next month, another one of PC GAMEPLAY's resident gaming mavericks chooses the five games that have already got him salivating at the mouth. Surely Commandos 2 and Unreal 2 will be incumbent in this chart... or will they?

window**SHOPPING**

THREE OBJECTS OF DESIRE FOR YOUR PERUSING PLEASURE IN ANOTHER GREAT GO-GO GADGET ROUND UP.

What's new in books?

IF YOU'RE OFF ON YOUR SUMMER HOLIDAYS THIS MONTH AND FANCY SOME READING MATERIAL, YOU COULD DO A LOT WORSE THAN MAKING SOME SPACE IN YOUR SUITCASE FOR SOME OF THESE TOP TITLES.

■ Out: **September** ■ Price: **£11.99**
■ Available from: **www.amazon.co.uk**

Of the three titanic struggles between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier that punctuated the 1970s, the final encounter, known as the Thriller in Manila, was by far the most significant. American author Mark Kram examines the greatest sporting rivalry of all time with a particular focus on Manila and re-evaluates the common conception of Ali

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£8.49**
■ Available from: **www.amazon.co.uk**

For a man who will forever be associated with New Laddism and putting the beautiful game before the beautiful wife, writing a novel from the perspective of a woman is a bold move in this witty and insightful novel. Hornby uses the character of Katie Carr to investigate how we can be good and exactly what this means
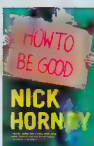
■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£14.40**
■ Available from: **www.amazon.co.uk**

It's been a quiet summer for graphic novels, so we thought we'd revisit an ageing classic that might have slipped under your radar. Corrigan is the product of half a decade's worth of toil from innovative artist Chris Ware, and is as visually stunning as it is brilliantly written
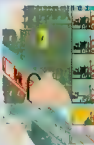
IOMEGA PEERLESS

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£289.99** ■ Manufacturer: **Iomega** ■ **www.iomega.com**

You hate throwing things out, right? That's why you've got a pair of water-skis in the loft, a snake-board in your garage, a catapult under your bed and a signed photo of Paul Daniels in your kitchen drawer. And it's the same with your hard drive. Surely you couldn't sleep at night if you didn't have that mp3 of the theme from the Rockford Files kicking around in the bowels of your PC. And what of that MPEG of Sarah Michelle Gellar 'experimenting' with her lady friend as seen in Cruel Intentions?

If you're running out of space on your creaking PC, buy yourself an Iomega Peerless. The Peerless is an innovative removable hard drive that connects to your USB port and offers an extra 20GB of storage – probably just big enough to accommodate the entire contents of your C drive. Theoretically the transfer speeds are somewhere around the 15MB/sec mark, and although some internet reports have suggested this may be some optimistic number crunching on Iomega's part, the Peerless is still a quick and simple way of freeing up a little room for a few more Sonic Youth tracks.

PEERLESS PRESSURE
This innovative hard drive creates storage on your PC to make heaps more space for all your favourites.

What's new in cds?

Six of the finest long-players to keep your feet a-tappin'

■ Price **£12.99**
■ Available from
www.hmv.co.uk

■ Price **£35.99**
■ Available from
www.amazon.co.uk

■ Price **£12.99**
■ Available from
www.hmv.co.uk

3D GAMEMAKER

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **TBA** ■ Manufacturer: **Dark Basic** ■ www.darkbasic.co.uk

GAME ON
Let your imagination run wild as you work through the nine stages to creating your own game.

A team of militant fat men have invaded your kitchen as a protest against the lack of decent period drama on terrestrial television and are threatening to work their way through your fridge with indecent haste unless Middlemarch and Anne of the Thousand Days are shown on primetime BBC1. But with the Director General of the BBC Greg Dyke refusing to be held to ransom, it's left up to you to reclaim your parlour armed only with a shipment of rugby balls, a mouthguard, and your lightning fast reflexes. Welcome to the wonderfully twisted world of Rugby Warrior Attack of the Fat Men Who Want to Watch Girly TV.

No, it's not the press release for the latest Ion Storm shooter. It's the involving and politically intriguing back story to a corking game created by our own fair hand using Dark Basic's 3D Game Maker There are nine stages to creating your game — selecting your character, enemies etc.— with each stage divided into eight themes. Work your way through this process, tossing in a cowboy here and a dog there, and in no time flat you've got a brand-spanking 3D game. You'll spend twice as long designing the game as playing it, but with so many combinations of objects and characters there's still a tiny amount of fun to be had in letting your imagination run wild

APPLE iBOOK

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£1,099** ■ Manufacturer: **Apple** ■ www.apple.com/uk

It's been a while since we've had a laptop in Window Shopping, so we thought we'd toss in this rather attractive specimen from a well-known computer firm that we'd rather not name OK, OK, it's an Apple, an iBook to be precise, but before you wander off into our reviews section in a desperate search for some gaming gold, please pause for a second

We appreciate your scepticism, so we'll keep this short and sweet — a 500Mhz G3 processor, a DVD drive, a crystal 1024x768 display and, best of all, a budget price tag of just over £1,000 It's small (11 inches across), light as a feather (2.2kg) and horribly fashionable. Just thought we'd let you know

iBook

■ Price **£12.99**
■ Available from.
www.hmv.co.uk

■ Price **£12.99**
■ Available from.
www.hmv.co.uk

■ Price **£12.99**
■ Available from
www.hmv.co.uk

Letters

THE LAST EVER PCGW COMMENTS!

One thing which really gets on my nerves is the amount of PCGW fans who've done nothing but complain since you took control of the mag. I bought one or two issues of PCGW before PC GAMEPLAY came out and the quality was simply rubbish. I am concerned that all these complaints trying to improve PCG are going to make your magazine just as bad

I don't mean to be so negative but I also thought Philip Evans' comment about your scores was a load of rubbish. I bought Black & White and I love it. It's clear I'm not the only one hooked, judging by the amount of people who play online and post tips on the game's official website

Although these things annoy me I think PC GAMEPLAY's the best magazine for the PC gaming market and hope the quality will stay the same
Richard Thorp, via email

There is a lot of moaning in your mag from supposed fans. This mag is PC GAMEPLAY, not PCGW, and is far better than PCGW anyway. Who are Richard Hammond and Mark Brickly to write what they did?

To move on to David McClean; I thought Jon Brown gave a good review of F1 Racing Championship, because the game was crap. David and Philip Evans are just as bad as each other by writing about what scores games were awarded. Your marks are mostly very accurate and reasonable — I can tell this by the 'What the other mags say' section in Global

I've been a long and great fan of PC GAMEPLAY and it shouldn't have had comments being fired at it by 'fans' and ex-PCGW readers
William Moulds, Belfast

Right, from now on we're barring letters which talk about PCGW. So please, please,

OH NO So Brownie got it right in his review? Don't say that, otherwise we'll have to start giving him something better than Aussie Rules Coach in the future...

WHY GAMES?
Got something you want to get off your chest? Then contact us at the address above. Pen the letter of the month and we'll send you a free game. Please note that we reserve the right to cut letters for reasons of length or otherwise and that although we read every letter we receive we cannot reply personally. Sorry

RAW DEAL Many readers have felt slightly miffed at having to pay £15 for Half-Life: Blue Shift, especially when most of them completed it in an evening. There's more on the value of games in our Big Issue feature.

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please... no more letters regarding our former incarnation! Criticism is still fine of course but it's surely time for a different approach guys and gals.

FEELING BLUE

I'm sure I'm not the only one, but I'd just like to say how disappointed I was with Half-Life Blue Shift. When it finally came out, I completed it within about three hours! That's far too short for a game. It's basically Half-Life with some new maps and a new weapon.

You also only see Gordon Freeman twice, and you can't even get near him. The only good point is the HD Pack, which does make the models better.

I hate to say this about anything Half-Life, but it is one of the worst games I have ever played!
Mike Oakley, via email

PLAY BLACK & WHITE

I am writing in response to Philip Evans' email in issue 14. Black & White has got to be the greatest game in the whole world, especially with the new creatures on your cover disk. My mates and I are totally obsessed with it and there is more to it than you think. Have you ever played a multiplayer game, Phil? Or experimented with your creature's personality and appearance? Granted not everyone has the internet, but there's still loads to do

A lot of games are full of bugs. It can't be helped so I think B&W should keep its Platinum award. Peter Molyneux is our lord and PC GAMEPLAY is our holy bible!!!!!
Thomas Pye, via email

Philip Evans might think Black & White is total and utter rubbish but that is his opinion and other people have theirs too. Who does he think he is?

Lionhead isn't going to spend three years and one hell of a lot of money on a game that only has a rating of one. I think B&W is soooooooooo good!
Robert White, via email

DON'T PLAY BLACK & WHITE

I have just paid an enormous amount of money for Black & White on the assumption your reviews are based on the quality of gameplay. What a mistake that was. After wasting hours on the game I still can't move around the world easily. The controls are a dismal failure and there are bugs. For example, going into the temple often causes the text to become corrupted.

I have subscribed for two years to your magazine but now I'm wondering if I've made a mistake and if your reviewing is influenced by games producers who can make £1000s on the basis of a good review

Games are expensive, so it is very important for PC magazines to communicate their worth. Ten out of ten is laughable
Dennis Wood, via email

Black & White, however good looking and hyped, is truly substandard. When you first play and you're on the training land it's enthralling. Every waking moment is spent dreaming of your 30-foot turtle or cow. But by the second land, and day after day of 'we need food', all you want to do is shoot

someone, something, or yourself!!! It's just so predictable and exactly the same each time!

The multiplayer could have possibly redeemed things, except that it's slow, unreliable, and to a certain extent, lame. The skirmish game? Just like the multiplayer but without the chance to throw someone's villager over a cliff. God's Playground? A good idea but flawed. Forget the add-ons (AKA cheap cash ins), why not make a much better and less buggy sequel?
Richard 'The Hooded One' Eccleston, via email

Right, that's also the end of B&W on these pages. Go to our online forum if you want to continue the debate.

SOUND ADVICE?

I bought issue 14 and read with interest the snippet on page 99 about how to rip sound and graphics files out of Deus Ex for use in whatever the hell you like

I have previously used wallpaper downloaded from Eidos to create a couple of Deus Ex themes for my own use, and have wanted for some time to get samples from the game to go with them, so was pleased to see you had found a way to do it. Except I don't remember seeing any .crf files in any of the Deus Ex directories

One quick search later revealed no .crf files at all. In any game I have installed. Or, for that matter, anywhere on my computer. Where did you get your information? Who discovered these .crf files that are 'simple archive files'? And what about a way to get into the REAL files associated with Deus Ex: .uax, .umx, .u. etc?

I look forward to hearing your explanation, and I'd also like to point out it is now July, not April Fools Day
Neil Morford, via email

Apologies to all for the confusion regarding audio and images. The piece on ripping graphics and sound effects should have been for System Shock 2, not Deus Ex.

THE SIM MASTER SPEAKS

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Fools! You doubted the power of The Sims: House Party and now you're seeing its true potential. Bet you didn't think it would stay in the charts for so many months.

You see, every Sims game and add-on pack is going to do well before they're even made because people love them. It

doesn't matter what you or anyone else says. PC GAME-PLAY, you should be ashamed of yourselves. Go and throw a party for your Sims, then change your score for House Party to at east eight

By the way, I am a fan of the mag, despite calling you fools. Don't listen to the likes of Mark Brickley or Richard Hammond, as they're

both pr***s and obviously haven't been reading it as long as me and so they don't know what they're on about

One last tip judge the next Sims game well before you score it
Andy 'Sim master' Maden

Stop it, Will Wright. We know it's you.

Letter of the month

>> **FOLLOW FILMS**
I read your article on the poor sales of critically acclaimed games, having purchased a small but select number of titles including Thief Gold, Thief 2, System Shock 2, Outcast, Caesar 3, Pharaoh and Half-Life. All were well received by the gaming press and all demonstrate virtues that make PC gaming a pleasure. However, had it not been for mags such as yours I wouldn't have known these games existed

I recently read how the UK games industry is actually worth more than the film industry. If this is the case, the games industry should begin to expand its advertising. For example, watching a few hours of TV each week I'm generally aware of film releases, yet I can only remember seeing adverts for three console games

Bearing in mind that software companies produce promotional videos for events such as the recent E3, they are missing an excellent opportunity to get their products in the public eye. It's all very well releasing material such as the Duke Nukem Forever

video through PC magazines, but a potential audience will always be limited to those people who are buying the mags.

A quality gaming TV magazine programme is also well overdue and a weekly slot would fit very nicely in BBC2's or C4's early evening schedule

Surely part of the reason for low sales is lack of appeal to a broad audience. I don't have the patience for platform games but I can appreciate why many people don't find strategy games as compelling as I do. It might be that, much like with films, what appeals to the overexposed palate of a critic is not what appeals to the average punter
Aaron Cripps, via email

Perhaps Mercenaries on Bravo might be the programme which shows PC gaming in a good light. You're right, there's certainly a need for a quality gaming magazine programme in a decent time slot, i.e. before midnight. But we don't think gamers are as bad as moviegoers for putting dross at the top of the charts, apart from maybe some ropey add-ons.
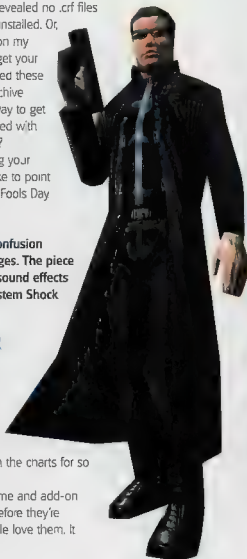
NO OWLS WATCHING Bits' accessible slot of 3am on a Thursday morning means that it is only watched by students, possums and graveyard-shift employees of 24 hour food stores and petrol stations.

FLAME CONCEPT The flamethrower is one of the most devastating weapons in the game. Kill this chap though and you can nick his weapon for yourself.

SPECIAL REPORT

COMMAND & CONQUER
RENEGADE

■ Out **October** ■ Price **TBA** ■ Publisher **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer **Westwood** ■ www.westwood.com ■ Players **1 + multiplayer**

DONE FOR We think it's safe to say this pilot has had it. If only you'd listened to fellow GDI soldiers and helped out in a secondary mission or two.

ON A MISSION TO GO HANDS-ON WITH ONE OF THE MOST EAGERLY AWAITED GAMES OF THE YEAR.

There can't be a single PC gamer who doesn't know the ins and outs of Renegade: the neat action game concept; the commando protagonist; slaphead Kane as bad guy; the 'history' between Havoc and lead villainess Sakura; the potentially groundbreaking multiplayer Command & Conquer mode where two teams of GDI and Nod attempt to destroy one another's base; the startling final mission revelation that Kane is, in fact, your brother! Okay, so we made the last one up. But it's symptomatic of a keenly awaited title that most game details are already known, guessed at, or simply fabricated, which is where PC GAMEPLAY comes in. Y'see, we've played

every mission and infiltrated the bowels of Westwood HQ to bring you this report and these exclusive screenshots.

Renegade is all about plonking you in the middle of a bloody big war between the GDI and Nod – the greatest design challenge Westwood faced, and one pulled off very successfully. Nod infantry continuously respawn, but do so logically by dropping into battle via helicopter or emerging from structures until these reinforcing mediums are destroyed. Missions encourage limited cooperation with fellow GDI soldiers, asking you for assistance in secondary missions or showing you how to blow up a Nod building from the inside. On other occasions

RENEGADE IS THE FULLY 3D action game equivalent of the popular Command & Conquer strategy series, played from either a first or third person perspective and featuring familiar C&C buildings, vehicles and weapons. You control commando Nick 'Havoc' Parker of the Global Defence Initiative, sent to rescue scientists from terrorist faction the Brotherhood of Nod, which wants to unlock the true power of the mysterious element Tiberium. While you move through missions as a maverick soldier, you're actually part of a bigger war between the GDI and Nod.

SET AT SEA Take out NOD emplacements with C4 explosives and you'll free gunboats to launch strikes and reduce the risk of GDI soldiers being slaughtered.
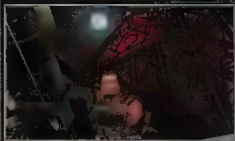
APC: The Armoured Personnel Carrier is designed to move multiple troops quickly across any terrain, while offering ample protection with its M60 machinegun.

they follow passively until spying danger. There are also times when Havoc interacts with former Dead Six members, such as the fifth mission in an East European mountain village where you must track down and rescue Deadeye, a former compatriot.

GLOBAL DEFENCE

So what about those buildings? The Nod boast airstrips, turrets, a Temple of Nod, obelisks, SAM sites and the Hand of Nod, while the GDI use advanced communications centres, advanced guard towers, barracks, guard towers, and weapons factories. Of course, both sides possess communications centres, helicopter pads, construction yards, power plants, repair facilities, Tiberium refineries, and Tiberium silos. Destroy the power plant and the entire base is affected: weapon production is slowed

and radars don't work. Or you can hit the production chain head on by destroying harvesters or the Tiberium-processing refinery. Buildings are also equipped with terminals, some eliciting significant mission info or an important blueprint for a later level.

Vehicles are equally necessary, whether employed as attack, defence or resource units. Nod produce mobile artillery, apache helicopters (one piloted by Sakura), cargo planes, flame, stealth and light tanks, buggies, recon bikes, and SSM launchers. The GDI, meanwhile, can exclusively send in Humm-Vees, mammoth and medium tanks, A-10 ground support aircraft, gunboats, and Orcas. As standard, both also own APCs, harvesters, mobile construction yards, hovercraft, MRLSs, and transport helicopters. Like the buildings, their full influence on how you approach missions is

TAKE CONTROL Vehicles are equally as necessary as buildings, whether employed as attack, defence or resource units.

felt in both the single player game and multiplayer C&C mode.

Enemy infantry is split into four ranks: grunts, officers, Black Hand special forces and bosses. Special forces troops are commanded by General Ravenshaw, with Mendoza and Sakura stationed beneath him. Ravenshaw is one of the few main heavies you encounter first-hand and kill, since slaying characters like Kane would contradict an already convoluted timeline conjured by the strategy series. Instead he directs operations off-screen, appearing in cut scenes and bitchy radio conversations with Havoc.

SNODDY NOD?

Each rank is subdivided into six classes: minigunner, rocket soldier, grenadier, engineer, flamethrower and mutant. And

WEAPONS DETAIL
We lift the explosive lid on Havoc's 21 weapons.

SILENCED PISTOL

TYPE: Handgun
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot silenced
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Pistol round
SECONDARY FIRE: One-shot silenced
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Pistol round

PUMP SHOTGUN

TYPE: Shotgun
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot automatic fire
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Shotgun round
SECONDARY FIRE: Two-shot automatic burst fire
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Shotgun round

AUTO RIFLE

TYPE: Rifle
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot automatic fire
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Auto rifle round
SECONDARY FIRE: One-shot standard grenade
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Standard grenade

CHAIN GUN

TYPE: Machine gun
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot automatic chain fire
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Chain gun round
SECONDARY FIRE: Five-round shotgun-like burst
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Chain gun round

RAMJET RIFLE

TYPE: Rifle
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot ramjet

AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Ramjet armour-piercing round
SECONDARY FIRE: One-shot ramjet
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Ramjet anti-tank round

RAILGUN

TYPE: Unique
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot automatic
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Nod rail gun round
SECONDARY FIRE: Three-shot automatic
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Nod rail gun round

LASER RIFLE
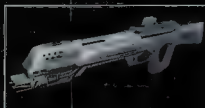
TYPE: Rifle
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Laser rifle round
SECONDARY FIRE: One-shot (battery dump)
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Laser rifle round, amplified

LASER CHAIN GUN

TYPE: Machine gun
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot automatic chain fire
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Laser chain gun round
SECONDARY FIRE: Five-round laser beam fire
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Laser chain gun round

SNIPER RIFLE
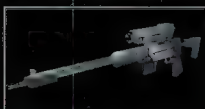
TYPE: Rifle
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Sniper round
SECONDARY FIRE: Zoom
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Sniper round

C4 PROXIMITY

TYPE: Mine
PRIMARY FIRE: Set proximity mine
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Proximity C4
SECONDARY FIRE: Set proximity mine
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Proximity C4

FLAME THROWER
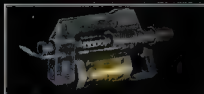
TYPE: Unique
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot automatic flame spray
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Flame thrower round
SECONDARY FIRE: One-shot auto napalm grenade
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Napalm grenade

C4 REMOTE

TYPE: Mine
PRIMARY FIRE: Set remote mine
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Remote C4
SECONDARY FIRE: Detonate all placed remote mines
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Remote C4

CHEM SPRAYER
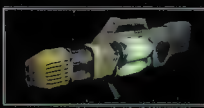
TYPE: Unique
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot automatic
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Nod chem squirt
SECONDARY FIRE: One-shot automatic
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Nod chem creeping cloud

C4 TIMED

TYPE: Mine
PRIMARY FIRE: Set timed mine
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Timed C4
SECONDARY FIRE: Set timed mine timer one second increments
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Timed C4

ION CANNON BEACON

TYPE: Mine
PRIMARY FIRE: Set ion cannon beacon
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Ion cannon beacon
SECONDARY FIRE: Set ion cannon beacon
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Ion cannon beacon

NUCLEAR STRIKE BEACON

TYPE: Mine

PRIMARY FIRE: Set nuclear strike beacon
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Nuke beacon
SECONDARY FIRE: Set nuclear strike beacon
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Nuke beacon

GRENADE LAUNCHER
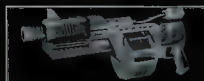
TYPE: Unique
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot automatic fire
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Grenade, standard
SECONDARY FIRE: One-shot automatic fire
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Grenade, standard, sticky

REPAIR GUN

TYPE: Unique
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot automatic
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Repair round
SECONDARY FIRE: One-shot automatic
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Repair round

VOLT AUTO RIFLE

TYPE: Rifle
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot automatic fire
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Electrical beam
SECONDARY FIRE: Chain fire
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Chain electrical beam

PERSONAL ION CANNON

TYPE: Unique
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot automatic beam
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Ion cannon round
SECONDARY FIRE: One-shot automatic ball
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Ion cannon round

ROCKET LAUNCHER
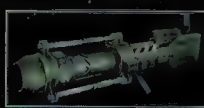
TYPE: Unique
PRIMARY FIRE: One-shot automatic
AMMO TYPE PRIMARY: Dumb fire rocket
SECONDARY FIRE: Three-shot multi-missile automatic lead 'n' fire
AMMO TYPE SECONDARY: Dumb fire rocket

COMMANDO Minigunner class soldiers are armed with at least three automatic weapons, including an auto rifle and chaingun. Get your hands on one now!

OBJECT LESSON Missions include escort, rescue, destroying certain buildings or emplacements, and searching for information. The latter is achieved by accessing computer terminals positioned in NOD buildings.

UP CLOSE Renegade is most annoying in these sort of situations when enemies refuse to dodge or move, even though you're firing point blank. How about a few more occasions when they retreat for assistance?

FLAME SPRAY As a comparison, the levels in Renegade are almost as big as those in Tribes 2, making for potentially epic multiplayer battles. Don't get lost.

WEATHER Calling in a nuclear or ion cannon strike results in spectacular fireworks. The Ion Cannon beacon changes weather conditions dramatically, and it's hoped the result will be more than aesthetic.

RENEGADE'S EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, DAN CERMAK, SPILLS THE BEANS ON THE LAST THREE YEARS.

PC GAMEPLAY: What do you mean by saying Renegade is an action game rather than a first-person shooter?
Dan Cermak: Most FPS products focus on the main character and have little room for what is going on in the environment. We are trying to recreate the C&C universe and want the player to feel like he is part of something bigger and that he can choose how he helps the GDI's cause. The war will rage on, no matter what the player's decisions are. He can't win the whole thing by himself, but he can definitely have an impact.

PCG: How are missions connected?
DC: All are objective driven. You need to complete the primary objectives or you fail. Completing the secondary objectives helps you achieve the primary ones, through reinforcements, better equipment and advanced intelligence. How you perform will determine how well armed and informed you will be in the next one. We also allow the player to maintain maximum health and armour.

PCG: Why can't you control air and sea vehicles?
DC: Technical reasons. We do not have the frequent level leads seen in many FPS games. Since we have a free form mesh we had to develop our own culling system to display only what can be seen from about ten metres and below. Going above that height allows the user to see every polygon in the level (an obvious hit to performance). The issue is not insurmountable but the time required to make it work was prohibitive. As for naval vehicles, it is conceivable you could pilot a hovercraft or gunboat, but we have not included situations where it is required.

PCG: How interactive are the environments?
DC: We are spending a lot of time creating objects that have multiple animation states and they will all be interactive. The events that occur in the game are fully interactive. Also we have added elements to the environments that can be occupied and used. There's nothing like getting in a Nod machine gun emplacement and mowing down a bunch of Nod troopers.

PCG: How does weather and daily cycles affect missions apart from aesthetically?
DC: Currently, they are aesthetic but we are reviewing what kind of impact they could make on the innate behaviour of the AI. For example, the level of rain might reduce the visibility of the AI .

PCG: With war raging, is it really possible to use stealth?
DC: We put you in the middle of quite a war but there are ample opportunities to use stealth, especially when you use the suppressed pistol. The pistol makes almost no noise so AI will be unable to respond to the muzzle fire, although they will still hear a ricochet. We have multipliers for hitting a soldier in specific areas of the body and if you catch them when they are not alert, you get an even greater modifier.

PCG: How does enemy artificial intelligence work?
DC: AI units are affected by what they see, what they hear, the mode they are in, weapon range, etc. The grunt class has a smaller hearing radius and shout radius than the officer, and the officer is smaller than the special forces. Officers have innate behaviour, which causes them to hang back and direct traffic. They are more powerful but are involved in coordinating the arrival of reinforcements.

PCG: When we played, enemies tended to run straight at you. Will this change?
DC: You were probably playing level one. We made an effort to really empower the player on the first level and give it that old feeling of C&C. Our innate AI is very powerful with settings that affect how the AI units act, and that will be seen more definitively in other environments.
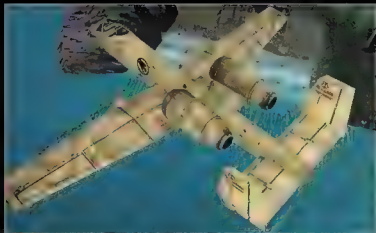
PCG: What do fans request the most?
DC: Almost all are for features. The request to have Kane appear in the game is number one. There are a lot for high blood and frags, but we aren't going down that path. A lot of C&C fans are younger and we want to make sure the game will suit the broader audience.

PCG: Have you added any new features since visiting the UK earlier this month?
DC: We have recently implemented stealth mode. It's up and running well.

PCG: What have you got left to complete?
DC: Not much. We are fine-tuning our AI, adding more weapons special effects, first-person animations, and polishing our single player and multiplay levels. We will probably continue to build new multiplayer levels up until we ship.

---

this is where Renegade's current problem lies. In principle, the higher the rank the better the artificial intelligence 'cone' in terms of seeing, hearing and calling for help. Unfortunately in practise there's no discernible difference between troop types because the AI is a bit inconsistent.

It's very reminiscent of Soldier of Fortune where enemies look great leaping, rolling and retreating to avoid bullets, but a few yards later you encounter one who takes a lead without reply or fails to react when someone standing next to him is felled. It's not that Renegade isn't difficult or in-depth enough, but for a game whose source belongs in the strategy genre there's not a great deal of brain activity taking place under those Nod uniforms. Gunning for a less hardcore audience is fine if you're Serious Sam, but we suspect the majority of Renegade's players will be long-term C&C fans eager to replicate their tactical manoeuvres in a fully 3D environment.

This is why we suspect the multiplayer C&C mode will become big business. Strategy stems from deciding whether to change your character's rank within a chosen class, upgrade to a better class or buy structures to improve resource flow. There's an option to repair buildings, and possibly rebuild them depending on game length and balancing issues. Money gained from harvesting Tiberium is split between your team, whereas cash from kills or destroying structures is yours to spend. Around ten maps are being created and scaled down for the mode, with the seven-storey Hand of Nod large enough to accommodate one map alone.

Renegade can't really fail, can it? It looks good, it plays slickly, and with general tweaking it should fill that market between old-school, one-note shooters like Serious Sam and narrative driven, character-based adventures. Otherwise we will play havoc, but not the way Westwood hopes.

PCG

■ Out: **Winter** ■ Publisher: **Sierra Studios** ■ Developer: **Monolith** ■ **http://sierrastudios.com/games/aliensvspredator2/**

LET'S ROCK!

WORDS darren evans

FIRST LOOK

In **Aliens vs Predator 2**, two of the nastiest, coolest creatures in the film world just happen to be in one place – best get there in order to shoot the crap out of them both.

BEAUTIFUL MONSTERS
The dreadlocked Predators and the tail-whipping Aliens have never looked so good.

Serious scientific and government effort has been made in the pursuit to discover if there's alien life out there. The Voyager 1 space probe was launched from Cape Canaveral in 1977 and is now over 7.5 billion miles away as you read this. Voyager is still sending signals. They take over 22 hours to reach Earth at the speed of light and by the time they arrive they're 20 billion times weaker than the battery of a digital watch – kind of like trying to get a decent reception of Channel 5 on your TV. More interestingly though, attached to the Voyager spacecraft is a gold-plated record with images, sounds, music and messages in 55 languages. It's placed there in the vain hope that some intelligent alien species that can speak one of the languages will capture it, decipher the multimedia content of the disc and come visit us.

Imagine then how red-faced the people responsible for this 'hello there' disc will be if the extra-terrestrial recipients turn out to be of similar temperament to two of

Hollywood's nastiest creatures, as seen in the blockbuster flicks Alien and Predator. Let's just be sure to have them in the front line when they come calling to savagely hunt us down.

In the meantime, we can all shortly get some alien-bashing practice when Sierra releases Aliens vs Predator 2, the sequel to the very popular (you guessed it) Aliens vs Predator. The setting for this latest episode takes place some time after the events as seen in Aliens (the second of the films). Some guy named Eisenberg leads an expedition to the ship first visited by the crew of the ill-fated Nostromo (the one with all the eggs in the first film, remember?). He discovers information about a 10,000-year-old Alien hive planet, promptly named LV-1201, and his team are attacked at the ship but he survives (under suspicious circumstances apparently). Not one to learn a lesson, he then sets up an institute on LV-1201. Again, the faeces hits the

fan and another bunch of poor, naive marines are called in to clean things up.

Oh and this whole mess hasn't gone unnoticed by a nearby clan of Predators, who just happen to visit LV-1201 every now and then for a spot of hunting.

Alien vs Predator 2 will use Mono this Lithtec 2.5 3D pixel pushing engine and fans of the first game can expect even better looking 3D visuals for both terrain and characters. Armour clad, gun-toting marines with squad emblems on the uniform, the dreadlocked Predator complete with his array of hunting accessories and the snapping jaws and tail-whipping ferociousness of the Aliens have never looked so good

ALIEN NATIONS There'll be seven levels per campaign for each species, but unlike the first game, where the missions for each species were very linear and isolated, Monolith is creating a richer, more complex structure with intersecting plot events. Expect more varied levels too with plenty of pant-soiling action in dark, spooky bases intimately coupled with

GOOD LOOKING The 3D models are much more detailed thanks to the new Lithtec 3D engine.
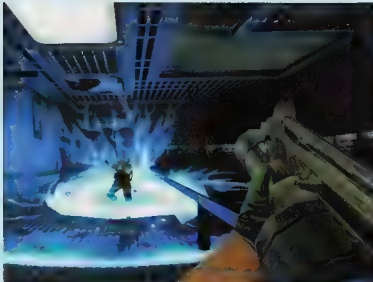
SHOCKING One of the Colonial Marine team members becomes the victim of friendly fire. There are some seriously powerful and devastating weapons to hand.

EYE ON YOU The Predator has a shoulder-mounted weapon with a laser sighting system, so should you find yourself almost blinded by the laser pointing right in your eye, as in the case with this dramatic face-off with a marine, it's already too late — you're dead meat
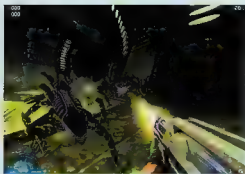
SPOOKY Aliens are fast and nasty This particular situation needs one thing, a change of underwear.

OUTDOORS Much of the first game was indoors but AvP 2 will feature some impressive external areas

impressive-looking outdoor scenarios, all incorporated in a much more narrative-driven game than AvP Multiplayer nuts will undoubtedly hearten at the news that Monolith is also going to throw 12 multiplayer-specific maps into the mix

CARNAGE KIT 'But what weapons can I play with', you cry? Well, the marines look set to come out on top here with access to even more neat kit Shoulder lamps for lighting up those worryingly dark corners, motion sensors, electronic lock picks, portable welders (for sealing or unsealing the odd door) and others are available, hinting at a much more interactive experience than the mere shooting spree affair of the original game There's also a wide range of humans to choose from Mercenaries were hired by Eisenberg to protect the base, synthetics (like

Bishop from Alien 1 and 2) performed the research duties at the base and combat synthetics are modified versions of these Even your average Colonia Marine comes in a variety of roles such as the grunt, sniper and SADAR (a weapon) troops

Predators will apparently arrive in two flavours — heavy armour and light armour — each with a different array of weaponry. Aliens, as you'd expect, have the usual sharp claws, snake-like jaw attack, the ability to run on walls and ceiling and that razor-like tail whipping palava. Monolith also hints at some form of pounce ability too, which could cause the occasional judder to your senses if caught unaware

If you like your weapons big and plentiful, if you revel in the joy of slaughter, if you simply must be scared witless while playing a game then this one looks set to satisfy all your desires when it hits the shelves in winter

PCG ■

MULTI-MARINE ACTION
Multiplayer nuts will undoubtedly hearten at the news that Monolith is also going to throw 12 multiplayer-specific maps into the mix.

■ Out: **October** ■ Price: **TBA** ■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Lionhead Studios** ■ www.bwgame.com

TRIALS ON THE ISLES

WORDS **jonathan todd**

FIRST LOOK

Creature Isles is Peter Molyneux's 'mini-sequel' to the year's biggest-selling PC game, Black & White. Can it offer a world of new challenges, or is it just a dubious add-on?

SEQUEL-ITIS
Come off it Peter!
Everyone can see
Creature Isles is an
add-on pack and not a
mini-sequel!

lthough Max Payne will probably assume the role in the next month or two, Black & White is the most talked-about game of the year to date. But after an explosive start, not all the recent tongue-wagging has been complimentary. Complaints concerning bugs, control issues and lack of anything substantial to do in the game have plagued our postbag even since we awarded maximum points to Molyneux's opus. And, problem-solving

delayed patch aside, it's evident some gamers wanted more from a hyped title four years in development. While not quite the Eden-shattering news you might be hoping for, Creature Isles is being treated as a mini sequel instead of an add-on. Except it is an add-on, at least to anyone who doesn't reside in Lionhead's marketing department. Black & White 2? Don't believe it

The game centres around a new island, discovered by those singing Missionaries and populated by a so-called Brotherhood of strange creatures, and villagers who've been blissfully living without a god. Enter you and your loyal creature stage left, armed to the teeth with miracles, skills, abilities and an oversized omnipotent ego to boot. That's until

you realise the Brotherhood forms the next stage in a creature's development, making your animal chum look as sophisticated and worthwhile as Tara Palmer Tomkinson.

Becoming a gold card holder of this exclusive club is subsequently a little tricky. Each member of the 'hood sets a specific trial or task for your creature, and all must be completed before an honorary tattoo is acquired indicating successful initiation. By now you should appreciate this threadbare story is just a different approach to teaching an old creature new tricks.

LEADING THE PACK Thankfully there's a new problem to contend with in the furry (or scaly) form of a creature's apprentice. Your apprentice copies your elder creature's actions and attitudes, eventually morphing to be like its mentor. Because your creature is fully responsible for the lively youngster's upbringing, catering for two should be a proper dilemma and

t' be interesting to see how obedient or otherwise the new arrival becomes without excessive intervention from players. The beastly double-whammy is also a real test of Black & White's artificial intelligence. Many digs at the game have centred on the autonomous and senseless actions of the creatures, such as eating villagers and destroying buildings for no apparent reason. There are real fears the presence of a second animal could result in double the frustration.

WORLD POLITICS While all this animal malarkey is going on, the island's welfare still needs looking after. Choosing to play good involves direct input in the lives of your followers, taking as much interest in their daily routines as necessary. Like the original, fluctuating between good and evil deeds provides the morally dubious fun before you eventually plump for a career path of black or white. It's the enjoyable difference between providing food and completing tasks or hurling innocents off a cliff.

Creature Isles might sit better with fans if it was a free download alongside the engaging bundle of multiplayer maps, village banter, footy game and music interface released recently. There's a worrying lack of beefy content to make it a necessary purchase, not least because the original is already so richly open-ended. A solitary island which looks identical to previous environments and plays virtually the same can't really justify receiving your hard-earned cash, but perhaps we're in for a few surprises come October. We hope so.

PCG

ADULTHOOD

ZEBRA CROSSING
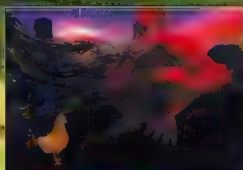
ODD COUPLE

THE FUTURE OF_ FOOTBALL MANAGEMENT GAMES

THE PRESENT...
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01

It's hard to believe that the first Championship Manager (released in 1992) with its fictional squad members and a paltry eight skills per player could evolve into the social life-leecher and marriage-wrecker we know today. In fact, you'll probably never read a review of any other footy management game which doesn't mention how superior the CM series is.

AGE	8
WEIGHT	Over 50,000 players; 26 leagues
FINISHING	Spreadsheet-style data; no 3D match engine
SKILLS	31 per player
SET PIECES	Media involvement; full transfer system
INFLUENCE	262,000 copies sold
COACH	Sports Interactive (www.sigames.com)
KICK OFF	Already released

THE FUTURE...
SKY SPORTS FOOTBALL MANAGER

As footy licenses go this is just about the biggest that money can buy. Slick presentation and meticulously researched stats are virtually guaranteed with Sky's backing, and its existence online ensures you can freely download updated stats instead of paying for annual revisions. But are you prepared to pay the monthly £6.99 subscription in order to play?

AGE	1
WEIGHT	Over 15,000 players; five English leagues
FINISHING	Sky Sports TV-style presentation; detailed commentary
SKILLS	17 per player
SET PIECES	Online only; cash prizes
INFLUENCE	Potential ten million Sky Sports viewers
COACH	NI Sports (www.nisports.com)
KICK OFF	Autumn

1. The interface is much improved from previous versions, and you can even access these options when results start pouring in.

2. The transfer system is second to none and remains the main reason why gamers prefer CM. Finding an unknown talent and turning him into the world's greatest player is an unbeatable feeling.

3. Scouts are a wasted opportunity and consistently fail to return with meaningful advice or detailed information. Definitely room for improvement in the 01/02 update.

4. Although the transfer values are out of date, you always end up paying over the odds due to clauses and player demands. CM4 will introduce agents. The horror!

5. Now the world's most expensive player. Hardly surprising with all those 20/20s. Unlike many footy games, individual attributes must be taken into account and aren't lazily lumped into one overall rating.

6. Apart from current form it would be nice to receive feedback on why morale dips, often for no discernible reason.

1. The different game worlds you play in. Begin in bronze-three and aim for gold.

2. Here you can check your history or view and amend your account records.

3. The commentary is arguably more detailed than Champ Man, reducing the repetition and giving a greater idea of where players are

4. The tactics are simplified and encompass the entire 11 instead of individuals.

5. The Sky Sports ticker keeps you informed of events such as current scores and manager sackings. Watch your own back...

6. The scoreboard lets you savour victory or rubs your nose in the dirt.

WE PREDICT: Slow, but the detail outweighs all online competition and its multiplayer game is better than CM.

DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL

We fondly remember an almost identical 1987 game for the Spectrum which delved into the murky economics of running a football club. Things have moved on since then, so it's no surprise that you now interfere in team affairs – as most football chairpersons probably now do – and watch from the pitchside how your ill-informed decisions pan out.

AGE	1
WEIGHT	Over 400 clubs and 11,000 players
FINISHING	00/01 stats; 3D match engine
SKILLS	12 per player + 13 'hidden'
SET PIECES	Ten-player multiplayer; teacup-throwing rants
INFLUENCE	Heart Line's Kicker series is huge in Germany
COACH	Heart Line (www.heart-line.de)
KICK OFF	September 28
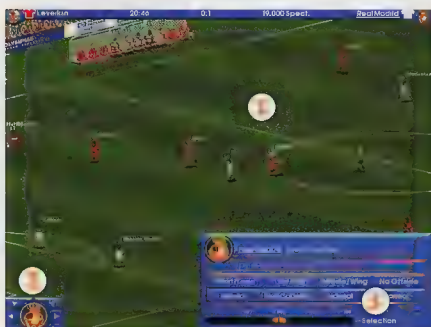
1 Jump to any match in any division, as well as watching up to four simultaneously.

2 A measure of control is retained by instructing which direction to pass and when to shoot. Some players respond better

3 All options in the game are adjusted using these simple sliding scales.

4 Influence players before a match and at half-time with motivational comments.

5 Use this sliding scale to praise individuals or give them a right dressing down.

6 There are more stats here than Champ Man. Unsurprising given the developer is a German studio.

WE PREDICT: A season of struggle. The stats and tables convey detail, but they're very trying to wade through.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 01/02

Although loyal supporters are impatiently waiting for a full reworking of the engine and interface in Champ Man 4, many would rather buy an updated version of CM3 for the new transfers alone. It's still astonishing why opponents don't near-plagiarise this game's simple approach. For more details and new screenshots, see our in-depth preview on page 56.

AGE	1 (new update)
WEIGHT	Over 100,000 players; 26 leagues
FINISHING	Spreadsheet-style data; no 3D match engine
SKILLS	31 per player
SET PIECES	New scout system
INFLUENCE	An amazing sporting legacy...
COACH	Sports Interactive (www.sigames.com)
KICK OFF	October
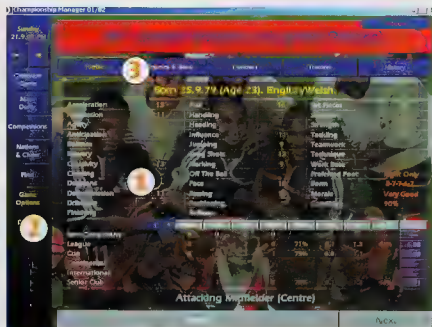
1 To emphasise the importance of scouts, researching players reveals their full stats.

2 The unappealing interface is the same, but at least you won't get lost in the sub-menus.

3 Send treatment room regulars away for surgery to repair lengthy and recurring injuries. Steven Gerrard, come on down!

4 Make notes on key players in four areas: promising youngster, transfer prospect, contract renewal and squad member.

5 Now your comments might incur the wrath of the media, FA, or even your fickle board

6 The update includes B-team and U-21 opportunities. Become Howard Wilkinson...!

WE PREDICT: The fans' favourite. Not too many outright changes though, as they're all being saved for CM4.

Respect for life is
a mortal concern.

■ Out: **September** ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **EA Sports** ■ www.uk.ea.com

F1 2001

WORDS **will sargent**

EA'S BACK WITH A RED HOT 2001 BRANDING IRON.

It might have used the much sought after Y2K stats, but one vital element that certainly wasn't 'in the game' when F1 2000 hit the shelves last year was speed

Unless you owned a £3,000 PC with RAM coming out of its ears, the game chugged along like a 950-pop Fiesta running uphill. Into the wind. With a slipping clutch. Even our P500 machines and 32MB 3D cards, which were pretty impressive rigs at the time, struggled to get anything more than 18-20 frames per second out of the jerking beast.

Had gamers known that reducing the number of cars on screen by half massively affected performance in EA's first foray into the world of Monaco mansions and busty pit chicks, they would have squeezed some value out of it, but this wasn't clearly documented

THE ENGINE ROOM F1 2000's problems were compounded by the large shadow of the much-hyped competitor that was Mr Geoff Crammond's GP3. Amazingly, no-one bothered to mention GP3 in the graphics stakes, pushing only 25fps on even the best machines. That 's if it didn't crash during setup. And although its physics and control was sublime, it wasn't quite as 'next generation' as the virtual equivalent of Ferrari's tifosi had hoped

FOUR PLAY Here we see four cars tearing around a brand new circuit. The car models and tracks have been re-done from the slowcoach let down that was F1 2000, so fingers crossed for a smoother ride in September.

This is why the first thing on EA's to-do list for this souped-up 2001 incarnation was rebuild the 3D, physics and artificial intelligence engines from the tarmac up. This time, using DirectX 8 instead of the jerk-o-rama that was DirectX 6. But the big question remains. Can EA get away with another F1 game after last year's disappointment?

EA wants the new game's control to be realistic, yet enjoyable, to give you the impression you are driving like an ace because of its forgiving control

The game's European product manager, James Deverill, explains: "We don't want the car drifting around like a rally car. If you go round a corner and the back end goes out, we want you to be able to do some opposite lock, put down the power and pull out of it We worked with British American Racing to get the drive model right, using telemetry data from test sessions. They can give us feedback on how a car feels in certain circumstances, depending on how you set the car up. In fact, we are sort of mirroring real life."

READY, EDDIE, GO Because EA spent millions on the official license for F1 2001 you get all the right drivers in all the right cars. That means poor old Pedro and Eddie are stuck in the spluttering Jags. Maybe next year lads.

ALL BAR NONE British American Racing provided telemetry data so this car should drive accurately.

WHEEL ACCURATE Watch the Jordan blast through seven forward gears via the wheel's LCD display.

HEY GOOD LOOKIN' This game's predecessor was potentially far better looking than the physics-led GP3, but a poor 3D engine let it down. EA is convinced it can now better Mr Crammond's sublime driving experience in all areas, and looking at this screenshot it's hard to disagree.

Sounds convincing, but how does the new game look and feel? No-one can deny that last year's game looked the mutt's nuts compared to GP3. It just didn't move very well.

RICARDO SITS We can prattle on all day – as is the wont of developers and producers – about frame rates, AI, and polygons, but proof that this new game works, and can go some way to challenge the refined feel of GP3, is that we sat and watched Ricardo Zonta – Jordan's replacement for Heinz-Harald Frentzen – play it during a hot test day at Monza, Italy. And he even had the cheek to wear his sweaty Jordan overalls during the playtest.

The diminutive Brazilian improved his lap time around Austria's scenic A1-Ring by a good two seconds having tinkered with his yellow car's settings to create more downforce, and seemed impressed with the game – and himself. In fact, it took a number of polite requests to get him off the chair so we could have a try and report back to you

It was reassuring to see less qualified drivers – such as ourselves – overshoot corners when pushing too hard. And unlike the PS2 version, and previous PC games in which you can brake hard 'in' a corner, you must – as in real life – brake before a corner and then accelerate out. This means learning the circuits intimately, to the point where you know which gear to take each corner in.

Of course, the computer opponents can make or break an F1 game, and publishers are

> **CRASH AND BURN**
> It was reassuring to see less qualified drivers such as ourselves overshoot corners when pushing too hard

usually all too quick-off-the-mark to proclaim their title's excellence in this field. We didn't see much evidence of it yet, but Deverill said: "Your opponents see every corner as an opportunity, so if they see a gap they will go for it. There's no dithering. If you knock into Montoya you just know the guy will try and take you out, unlike Coulthard who will just sit behind you for 25 laps."

Visually the game looks as good as last year's. We had expected something a little more detailed to be honest. Yes, there are flags waving in the crowd, and motion-captured pit crews but the trees and advertising billboards look plain to say the least

Ubisoft's upcoming F1 sequel – F1 Racing Championship 2 – certainly looks more visually detailed, but we have seen nothing of GP4 yet, so it will be hard to recommend this for a podium position for a short while

As ever it'll be the enjoyment factor, driving mode and AI opponents that ultimately decide who wins. EA will also hope those that paid £35 for last year's game have fairly short memories.

PCG ■

FULL FRONTAL A massive array of camera angles will feature in the finished game come September. Let's not tell EA we only ever use two of them – in the cockpit and above-and-behind. Replays my ar**.

■ Out: **September** ■ Price: **TBA** ■ Publisher: **JoWood** ■ Developer: **Reality Pump** ■ www.jowood.com

WORLD WAR 3
BLACK GOLD

WORDS robin potter

A REAL-TIME STRATEGY THAT ISN'T SET ON A SPARSE ALIEN WORLD? CRAZY... BUT IT MIGHT JUST WORK.

Although Earth 2150 retains a loyal following, the year-old real-time strategy, which finally managed to drag the genre into three-dimensions in a workable fashion, has since had its head pushed under the water by pyrotechnically advanced young upstarts such as Ground Control and Z: Steel Soldiers. The Moon Project, a kind of stop-gap update masquerading as a sequel helped to rekindle interest, but the hard truth is that the 3D strategy market is quickly becoming the most competitive in PC gaming. WW3: Black Gold is a spin-off of sorts, designed to keep Earth fans happy while developer Reality Pump, formerly known as Topware, beavers away on Earth 3 for Xbox and PC.

The subtitle, Black Gold, isn't referring to the rubbish Soul Asylum song of the same name, funnily enough. No, the black gold in question is oil, a resource that has become so scarce in the near future that the world's most powerful nations have started throwing more than just thinly veiled insults at each other in order to get their hands on some. Whether these apocalyptic events are triggered by a bunch of militant West Country hauliers eager to save a few pence a week on petrol remains to be seen. The oil crisis concept neatly kills two birds with one stone by providing an excuse for mass worldwide destruction and solving the problem of what will be the 'valuable resource' that inevitably has to be mined in all games of this sort. So, no more harvesting the precious yet boring shiny crystals to convert into tanks then.

Quite bizarrely, WW3 will be almost alone in its genre by being the only RTS to be set more or less in the present day (the recent Conflict Zone aside). So instead of automated laser defence systems and teleporting shock troops, WW3 will rely on the instantly recognisable world of pill boxes, jeeps and choppers. Each side will have its own units based on their real world armies. Similarly, the maps will be strewn with recognisable buildings and land features such as roads and railway tracks. The makers of first-person shooters realised long ago that gamers are far happier splattering the brains of polygonal humans than crappy looking aliens, and it looks as though this idea may be filtering through to strategy developers. Hopefully, we'll be given the opportunity to reduce world famous landmarks to crispy ashes with an arsenal of nuclear weapons.

TO EARTH FANS WITH LOVE The gamers who enjoyed Earth 2150 will be pleased to hear that the more original ideas from that game

BULLET TIME The little coloured bullets above each unit are ammo indicators. Blackhawk helicopters will need to resupply your tanks regularly, so keep a vigilant eye on the falling levels, otherwise you'll be ammo-less.
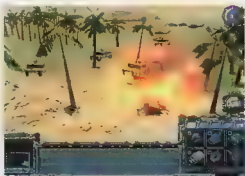
FIREWORKS Explosions cause damage to nearby units and buildings, so keep a distance from bases.
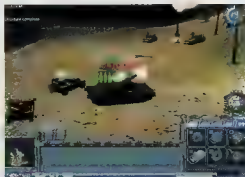
NIGHT VISION The graphics come into their own at night. Headlamps can be dimmed for extra stealth.

NATURAL GAS Armed with only a box of matches, the flatulence suicide bomber can cause havoc in enemy oil refineries. Ensure that you keep him hidden when you're in the vicinity of such flammable materials! Not really. The refineries make a perfect target, with a massive impact guaranteed if you use your weaponry well. We wouldn't like to be an Esso protester when this blows up!

remain intact. The day/night cycle and changing weather conditions add atmosphere and allow for new strategies, especially in multiplayer, when poor visibility increases the effectiveness of surprise attacks. The bridge building and trench-digging aspect also makes a welcome return, again adding to the number of ways in which the enemy can be defeated. In order to maintain free-flowing and hassle-free gameplay, the camera remains easily controllable to ensure that you don't end up looking uneasily at the sky during those panicky moments when your base comes under attack from all sides. It's possible to get up close and position yourself in the thick of

the action, and while the graphical detail seems to be lacking when compared to Ground Control, everything remains smooth even when 20 tanks trundle across the screen

THE NOT SO GREAT WAR Our only concern with WW3 is that it may lack innovation. The old formula of collecting resources to build a base of unmanageable size and churn out endless units to fight a seemingly endless war of attrition is perhaps a bit too old-skool these days, especially with games such as Shogun succeeding in breaking the mould. We're also hoping it won't turn out to be little more that a glossy mod for Earth 2150, but judging by the

quality of the cut scenes and the emphasis on storyline, it's unlikely that this will be the case Reality Pump is promising that 30 missions set over six campaigns will feature in the final release. Combine this with a mission editor, the obligatory skirmish mode and multiplayer options, and armchair generals may well have something to get excited about

PCG

HOT OR NOT?

HOT!
- Steers away from the hackneyed sci-fi setting.
- Uses a tried and tested engine.

NOT!
- Unlikely to shake the genre to its foundations.
- May end up looking next to its closest rivals.

PC GAMEPLAY HOT-O-METER

MUSHROOM QUICHE · MUSHROOM CLOUD
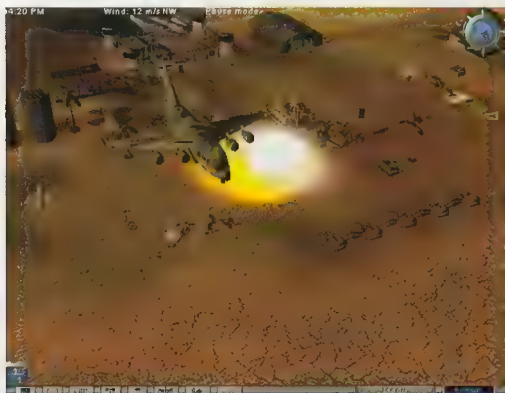
LATE DELIVERY New units are delivered by helicopters and transport planes. Anti-aircraft fire will quickly send them plummeting groundwards in a blaze of fire, however. So keep an eye out, then blast them down.

TRAIN IN VAIN Be extremely careful when crossing the tracks, as these locos cut through Hum Vees like a hot knife through melting butter.

■ Out: **March** ■ Price: **TBA** ■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Sunflowers** ■ www.anno1503.de

ANNO 1503

WORDS jonathan todd

BEST GET READY FOR A BRAVE NEW WORLD.

No clothes and no spices. Again. Moaning and gesticulating wildly, the ladies leave the somewhat threadbare market with empty shopping baskets and even emptier bellies. You don't need a degree in business studies to pinpoint the problem, too many inhabitants, modest businesses, not enough supplies. No Tesco, either. Life in the Middle Ages isn't easy. But luckily in this prequel to Anno 1602 you have more chance of meeting demand for fine yarns and sturdy clogs. And beer, of course.

Anno 1503 is a game of consequence, with everything you do impacting upon your burgeoning civilisation as a whole, particularly

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT? Everything from food and booze to tobacco and tools has a production line. Balancing between necessities and luxuries is the challenge, so you can't just let people get wasted every night.
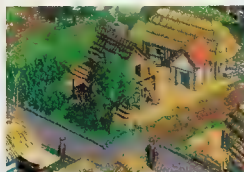
FAN FAVOURITE The majority of production chains were suggested by Anno 1602 players

when it comes to goods. Production chains are more complex and closely interconnected than before. If you run out of grain, for instance, the mills stand idle and the breweries won't, er, brew. Supplies of food and alcohol then dwindle, and the citizens become angry at fewer opportunities to get hammered after a hard day's slog, possibly moving away from town which results in fewer taxes.

Many of the 40 production chains also manufacture more than one product, forcing you to decide whether you want to generate two types of produce or concentrate on one. To ease you in, goods such as gold jewellery or spices aren't needed until people of the fourth or even fifth level of civilisation are residing in your humble town.

Surplus goods can be sold to travelling tradesmen or trading partners, so it's your chance to get revenge on those Venetians who sold tools at rip-off prices in Anno 1602. The Venetians are one of nine new cultures with which you can haggle over every last shiny piece of gold. For example, if you can't produce iron and weapons because you don't possess an iron ore mine, you have to pay over the odds for iron ore, iron or the finished weapons themselves.

Protecting your culture is largely accomplished at sea. Cannon-heavy battle ships make up for lack of firepower in trade vessels, and you can set formations and issue waypoints to avoid pirate outposts or enemy harbours. A percentage wear and tear scale also lets you tell ships when to return home for repairs.

PCG ■

FIVE-POINT PLAN The game is roughly made up of five varied challenges: finding a settlement, building upon it, meeting the needs of your people, defending your land, and encouraging diplomatic relations

■ Out: **September** ■ Price: **£TBC** ■ Publisher: **Cryo Interactive** ■ Developer: **Gamesquad** ■ www.gamesquad.fr

FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

WORDS **r o b   a d a m s**

PITCH & BITCH

Written by Hubert Chardot, the man responsible for the first three 'Alone in the Dark' titles, this should be good.

Yeah, and its based on the 1996 vampire flick of the same name so we should expect plenty of dust exploding night dwellers as well.

It's based on a similar approach to 'The Devil Inside' and it has you cast in the role of George Clooney's character from the film, Seth Gecko.

Ah, so this may assuage the desire of any individuals out there who may want to play the grey-haired one.

Well, not necessarily, the game does appear to be somewhat detached from the setting of the film, with you on a floating prison ship infested with creatures of the night.

But I thought vampires couldn't cross running water.

So did I.

WILL THIS SEMI-SPIN-OFF OF THE MOVIE GO TO HELL?

hat's all this about Max Payne and 'bullet time'? Doesn't anyone remember a game called The Devil Inside arriving on our shelves last year? A game set in the third-person perspective with the ability to slow the action right down in the heat of battle and watch as some particularly nasty zombie's head explodes Dawn of the Dead style. How peculiar!

From Dusk Till Dawn is a sequel of sorts. Set after the events of the titular Rodriguez/Tarantino collaboration, it casts you in the role of Seth Gecko (the character played by Clooney), incarcerated in a floating prison ship that is somehow infested by a host of vampires, your task, should you choose to accept it, is to fight your way through 21 blood-soaked levels.

The game, which has been penned by Hubert Chardot (of Alone in the Dark fame), aims to go beyond the simple shoot-'em-up formula of many of its ilk (which would have actually suited much of the film's style). Instead the game's structure changes from
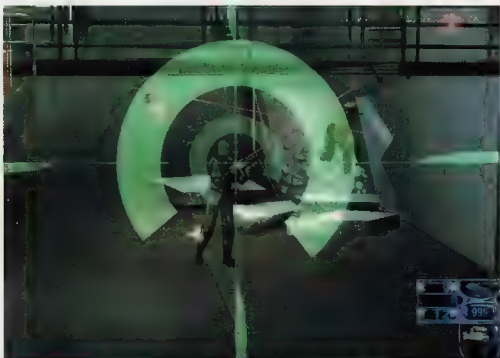
TARGET ACQUIRED Written by Hubert Chardot, mastermind of the original Alone in the Dark game, From Dusk Till Dawn has the potential to be the rarest of things – a good Cryo Interactive game.

level to level. In one area you may be given the simple task of blasting your way through, whereas the next level may see you escorting an important yet extremely

WHO NEEDS BUFFY? Numerous weapons ensure Seth needs no help when it comes to vampire slaying

GREEN WITH ENVY This character looks more like a lizard man than a vampire. But what do we know?

vulnerable prison guard that leads to you resorting to some underhand sneaking around to complete your goal. The variety of different game styles promises an interesting alternative to the countless mindless blasters currently doing the rounds. But it could also be its undoing if the different game elements don't gel to make an entertaining whole.

Graphically the game is very similar to The Devil Inside. Played from a choice of views (from the ubiquitous first and third-person through to a variety of others) you're given the opportunity to stake your way through a whole host of different vampire breeds and classes.

With a suitably gory level of effects, you can dispatch those creatures of the night in many different and satisfying ways. What do you mean blowing its head off didn't result in it disappearing in a cloud of dust? Quick, whip out your stake and send it straight to hell (or wherever).

Will From Dusk Till Dawn succeed? Well, if it can hold up to its ideals in providing that little something extra special lets hope so. With a blend of action, gore and horror that so closely fits in with the film we can but wish that, come the daylight of September, this little beast won't disappear in a cloud of dust.

PCG ■

TOTALLY CLOONEY Set some time after the first film, the game follows the continuing adventure of Seth Gecko, played by current Hollywood fave George Clooney. Can you get Seth off the prison ship in one piece?

HOT OR NOT?

HOT!
■ Hubert Charbot's input ensures an intriguing plot.

NOT!
■ The graphics need a lot of work.
■ The different game styles need to gel.
■ Game locations look sparse and uninhabited.

PC GAMEPLAY HOT O METER

FUNERAL PYRE ——————————— VAMPIRE

■ Out: **September** ■ Price: **TBA** ■ Publisher: **CDV** ■ Developer: **House of Tales** ■ www.mysteryofthedruids.com

MYSTERY OF THE DRUIDS

WORDS **jon brown**

PITCH & BITCH

Oh my God! That's absolutely horrific.

Sweet baby Jesus! I think I'm going to vomit.

How do you think they stripped the flesh off of the bone so neatly?

Huh? I think we might be talking cross-purposes here. What exactly are you on about?

This pile of human remains. You know, the bones that spark the adventure in the Mystery of the Druids. Why, what were you talking about?

I was talking about the animation in Mystery of the Druids. It looks three years old. Have you not seen Alone in the Dark 4?

Fair play, but as you know it's the gameplay that counts and Druids is as good a point-n'-click adventure as you'll have played this year.

Better than the almighty Gilbert Goodmate? Surely it's not possible

Very droll.

THERE'S A KILLER ON THE LOOSE BACK IN 1000AD.

The star of Mystery of the Druids, Brent Halligan, is an English man with an American name created by a German software company that works at Scotland Yard. Is it any wonder that the man's confused? Frankly no, and it's up to you to help him straighten his life out

To begin with he needs to find the sneaky blighter responsible for the charred remains of a male corpse found in Epping Forest. The murder appears to be the work of a ritualistic serial killer, possibly a member of a strange druidic order operating within the area. Linking up with the foxy anthropologist Dr Melanie Turner, Halligan sets off on the trail of the killer and soon stumbles on the path of a wealthy recluse, Lord Sinclair, who appears to be a figurehead for this shadowy organisation. And then things take a turn for the worse.

Halligan and Turner discover that an ancient rite is about to take place and that they must travel back in time to the year 1000AD to bring a halt to all this spooky nonsense. It's like watching Robbie Coltrane prancing around in Cracker for half an hour, then turning over to Channel 4 to catch the end of Time Team

After conducting a thorough examination of Mystery of the Druids, we sent a sample downtown to our forensic lab, who discovered a set of fingerprints belonging to Westwood

If you hadn't gone and put a warrant of apprehension for Prince Charles in the computer after Princess Di's accident, we wouldn't be in this mess.
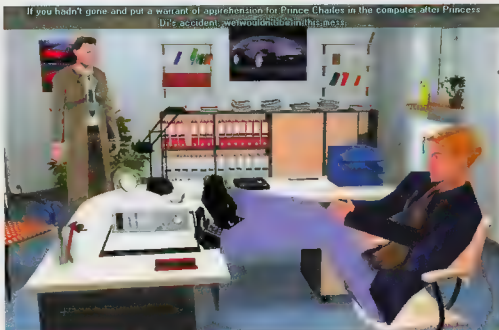
SCOTLAND THE BRAVE In between scouring locations for clues, Halligan retreats to his Scotland Yard office to talk the case over with his colleagues and deposit any evidence with the forensics department.

Studio's Blade Runner, along with bodily fluids from the Broken Sword series. As far as Mystery of the Druids' influences go, it's an open and shut case. In short, it's a point-n'-click adventure with the emphasis on detective work, gathering clues and interrogating suspects

The game features over 50 locations, from the offices of Scotland Yard to the ancient grounds of Stonehenge, along with 360 interactive scenes, over 20 active characters and five hours of dialogue.

FACE FACTS The character models and animations in Mystery of the Druids are particularly impressive.

Point-n'-click adventures are pretty low on the ground these days, and with recent samples including such timeless crap as The Ward and Gilbert Goodmate, there's every reason to count this as a blessing. Fair to say then that Mystery of the Druids has to be something really special to convince us that there's any life left in this decaying genre, particularly with the fully 3D Escape from Monkey Island already out there and Broken Sword 3 on the horizon.

The story is intriguing and the characters seem interesting enough, but visually the game is slightly suspect and some of the puzzles seemed a touch unfair. Nevertheless, you'd be foolish to count it out just yet. Maybe it will have that killer touch after all

PCG ■

THE BURNING BUSH The idea here is to set fire to the bush in order to distract the gardener long enough to swipe his impressively sharp shears. With these in your possession you can stroll over to the other side of the garden and cut your way through the hedge.

HOT OR NOT?

HOT!
■ Mix of real life locations and time travel is nice.
■ Plenty of locations to visit and people to speak to.
■ Impressive characters, particularly when speaking.

NOT!
■ Looks slightly dated. Puzzles have to be spot on.

PC GAMEPLAY HOT O-METER

GILBERT GOODMATE   CYBERFLESH PREVIEW

MAGIC & MAYHEM THE ART OF MAGIC

WORDS **martyn clayden**

PITCH & BITCH

Battle hordes of mythical creatures with sword and sorcery against the backdrop of stunning 3D environments.

So this is just another fantasy role playing game then?

No, it's not as easily categorised as that. For starters you need strategy as well as role-playing skills.

Hmmm. So it's in a similar vein to Battle Realms then?

Kind of, yes. But we've got loads more spells and you can conjure up creatures to battle by your side.

It certainly looks the business.

Yup, the game's undergone a full 3D makeover complete with a 360 degree revolving camera and big spell effects.

M&M RETURNS WITH MORE TWISTED SORCERY.

I t was only two years ago that the original Magic & Mayhem appeared and tried to blur the line between real-time strategy, role-play and adventure, and the sequel has stayed true to its roots while introducing some much needed improvements

This battling wizards tale is actually a prequel (seems to be a bit of a trend in gaming worlds – it gives the developers even more license to come up with a storyline that makes absolutely no sense), set 500 years before the first game, when young villager Aurax (nursing a hangover from his 18th birthday party) is sent to find his sister Nadia who's missing in some nearby woods. He arrives to find her surrounded by goblins that she calmly dispatches with fire-bolts and then informs him that he also contains the power within him to be a mighty magician. Which is a useful skill, although it must be irritating to find that your spellbound sibling has kept it a secret for quite so long

When evil minions led by a rogue wizard attack the village, killing his father and kidnapping his sister, Aurax knows it's time to start developing his powers and sets off in pursuit of the mystical bandits

The spell system is contained within your portmanteau that contains the three vital talismans representing chaos, law and neutral. As you collect ingredients on your journey, you choose which talisman you want to combine them with, providing different results.

For instance, deadly nightshade linked to neutral will summon a fireball and linked to

chaos will create a skeleton. Only one element can be united with a talisman so this is where the strategy element kicks in. Additionally, an alignment slider will rearrange your spells to make you more powerful

All spells naturally don't come free and you can monitor the cost in mana when you're choosing which witches brew to conjure up. Mana can be increased by either finding certain places of power to recharge your batteries or collecting mana sprites scattered around the map. So a balance between spell-casting and mana collection must be met.

Success in each level increases your experience points and allows you to progress

as a wizard and there are up to 22 creatures you could potentially summon to help you in your campaign. A multiplayer option allows you to go head-to-head with eight others either one-on-one or as teams. Mass online spell-casting could well be irresistable

The other big innovation is the new 3D engine that really comes to the fore during spell casting and summoning. Watching a dragon unfolding in the sky and then spouting fire or seeing meteors scattering your enemies is spectacularly dramatic. Tops of buildings and trees can be toggled on or off and the ever-popular fog of war is there to increase the tension

PCG ■

A SPELL IS BORN As according to the Magic Related Game Laws, all spells must result in a brilliant explosion, with a supernova-esque ray of light to prove that the spell actually worked. This is no different.

MARSHMALLOWS? The dragons are already looking pretty impressive. Avoid the fire though.

RECIPE FOR MAGIC The game will involve linking different ingredients to make different spells. Mixing the wrong parts will result in a particularly useless spell. There's always a degree of strategy in getting the mix.

HOT OR NOT?

HOT!
■ New 3D graphics engine ensures lush visuals
■ Spell system looks promising.
■ Multiplayer mode as team or one-on-one.

NOT!
■ A greater variety of spells is essential.

PC GAMEPLAY HOT O METER

LABYRINTH   LORD OF THE RINGS

■ Out. **September** ■ Price: **TBA** ■ Publisher: **JoWooD** ■ Developer: **Bugbear Entertainment** ■ www.jowood.com

RALLY TROPHY

PITCH & BITCH

Rally Trophy promises to breathe much-needed life into a tired looking genre.

That's all fine and dandy. But is it any good in comparison to Colin McRae 2? A PC GAMEPLAY Platinum recipient if you remember?

Comparisons are inevitable but we're looking to do something different by including cars from 30-40 years ago and showing how much harder it was competing in them.

Sounds interesting, but you have to admit there's only so much you can do with a rally game – and CMR2 goes just about everything.

No game is flawless. And once you get behind the wheel of one of our cars you'll see what a challenge Rally Trophy is.

Strap me in!

WHEN COLIN MCRAE WAS STILL IN NAPPIES....

Although it's one of the few motor sports that's vaguely exciting and dangerous for both participants and spectators, why is it the drivers have less personality than a mudguard? Even the flying Scotsman, Colin McRae, probably the only rally driver most of us can name, tends to freeze in front of the TV cameras and only mumbles how great a race he had. Hardly 'inspiring stuff. And don't get us started on those miserable guides.

Just as well, then, that Rally Trophy, formally known as 'Historic Rally Trophy, transports you back to the non-wimpy 60s and 70s when real men didn't rely on radio contacts, active suspension and electronic fuel injection. Oh no. It was humble man versus hulking machine, often with the latter coming out on top.

For both single and multiplayer action the game features a rally and arcade mode. Rally mode is just your car pitted against the clock in a 40+ stage championship, with multiplayer seeing up to 64 players competing over the internet. Arcade mode, meanwhile, finds either five computer controlled opponents or five human adversaries (via LAN) on one of ten circuits at once. Hopefully the tracks will be widened in the latter for some fiendish overtaking manoeuvres

BUMPER CARS Although the dents are often superficial or aesthetic, you can go as far as damaging the suspension or breaking the gearbox. When this happens it's essentially race over and back to the garage.

if cars such as the Mini Cooper 1275S, Ford Escort MK1 RS2000, and Hillman Rallye Imp mean anything to you then you're in luck. 17 vintage machines make up the showroom, each featuring the crudest of tyres, rear-wheel drive and power to weight ratios, which result in a devilishly difficult challenge just trying to make it to the finish line in one piece. The preview version allowed us to try three different cars, and though there are no noticeable handling discrepancies barring

speed, this doesn't matter too much because the odds are always against you from the word go regardless of design. We'd love to say how pre-race tinkering under the bonnet and fine-tuning actually matters come raceday, but this option wasn't available

GRIPPED AND SORTED While the slightly shoeboxy cars aren't up to Colin McRae's cutting edge graphical splendour, the damage modelling packs a suitably meaty punch. Glass

EAT GRASS Fall on your side or back and you're righted almost immediately, but in poor condition.

ICE, ICE BABY Retaining control is extremely difficult on the obligatory snowy track in Sweden.

HEAD-ON Changing the camera angles might make for scenic views, especially when racing the narrow, winding mountain roads of Switzerland, but that's about as far as their use goes. Best stick to the main view.

SPIRIT OF SPEED 1937
YEAR: 1937
MEANING...
Pathe news and handlebar moustaches

GRAND PRIX LEGENDS
YEAR: 1967
MEANING...
Graham Hill, not Damon Hill

DIRT TRACK
YEAR: 1976
MEANING...
Scarily big hairdos

CARMAGEDDON
YEAR: 2028
MEANING...
Maniac drivers and zombies

POD SPEEDZONE
YEAR: 2097
MEANING...
Thumping mid-90s techno music

LENS FLARE A little bit of damage and already a headlight is out. It's now harder to see in dusky Russia, with clusters of trees blocking out most of the natural light. Taking it steady on corners might be the best option now but obviously your times will suffer drastically.

splinters and smashes, body panels are dented and torn, and the best part is these collisions affect handling. What makes the battering even harsher are the lush environments. These aren't barren wastelands distinguished by the odd cardboard tree but dense forests, steep hills and deadly ravines designed to flip, toss and spin your car at every opportunity. Accidentally moving just one wheel off the narrow track frequently sends you thwacking into obstacles or, worse, trapped between them, ultimately flushing away any last chance of winning.

It's a shame these audacious events go unappreciated by a static, cardboard crowd

seemingly lifted straight from Colin McRae 2, which remains impervious to your handbrake heroics. In fact, Rally Trophy is a game sorely in need of atmosphere injections. Plenty of them. Cars currently sound like whiny, tinny bees rather than growling hunks of metal and there's also little or no aural variation between terrain — a particular disappointment given the snow, gravel and grass surfaces to name a few. Even the odd cheer or whoop when you hurtle round a corner would be a good start.

TIME TRIALS The one time you can get excited is breaking circuit records, indicated by invisible checkpoint markers which briefly flash how far ahead or behind your previous best times you are. It's a constant dilemma whether you should riskily push the engine that little bit further on tight bends or contently wait to accelerate only on straight stretches of track.

The recent boom in rally and off-road games mean there's some healthy competition to be king of the road this year. 4x4 Evolution 2, Rally Championship Extreme and Master Rallye are due before the end of the year, and they're all looking to take on Colin McRae 2 in addition to one another. Rally Trophy certainly boasts the spit and polish of its contemporaries, as well as offering a stiff challenge and alternative cars in believable environments. Missing is that bit of extra mileage CMR2 seems to inherently possess **PCG** ■

DRIVING BLIND Rally Trophy is beautiful to look at but it's still not quite up to Colin McRae Rally 2's high standards. It's too frustrating to be completely enjoyable, and sometimes this isn't a deliberate ploy.

HOT OR NOT?

HOT!
■ A range of cars not seen in other rally games.
■ Realistic environments with plenty of hazards.

NOT!
■ It's no Colin McRae Rally 2.
■ The handling is frustrating, albeit deliberately.

PC GAMEPLAY HOT 0 METER

BACKSEAT DRIVER HELPFUL CO-DRIVER

■ Out: **October** ■ Price: **£19.99** ■ Publisher: **Eidos Interactive** ■ Developer: **Sports Interactive** ■ www.sigames.com

CHAMPIONSHIP
MANAGER SEASON 01/02

WORDS jonathan todd

AS RELIABLE AS MAN UTD WINNING THE PREMIERSHIP.

Chances are if you've got this far you're already a massive fan of Championship Manager. The odds of a non-footy, non-CM enthusiast coming across this spread and thinking: 'hey, those screenshots look great compared to previous versions. I must read on,' are more remote than seeing David Ginola helping out in defence.

You don't really need us to spout on for two pages about how great the 01/02 update is shaping up. We all know the up-to-date stats are the most accurately researched. We appreciate the vast amount of players, teams and leagues. And we certainly realise that not including a 3D match engine is the best decision the Collyer brothers ever made. Even if the new game only featured updated data it would be £20 well spent. We're going to blag a copy. You're going to buy it. It's that simple. So instead we've decided to tell you how 01/02 could be greatly improved.

The best addition is definitely the option to manage with certain player attributes masked. These are random, both in terms of selection and number, and depend on how famous the player is and the division he's competing in. This can make for some odd choices when

you come across fairly well-known first division cloggers with missing stats and then stumble upon Johnny Foreigner who reveals all.

Okay, that's pretty much your lot for original features. There is a smattering of new options here and there but most just build on what's

gone before. For instance, you can set a dedicated playmaker at the tactics screen in 00/01, when researching a player scouts often return with extra reports on promising youngsters; players offer opinions on recent transfers, signings and fellow professionals.

EARN YOUR SPURS As ever the player wages are accurate, though Sol must be a bit disappointed he's not an indispensable member of the squad. We can't believe he hasn't asked for any stupid clauses either.

MEANING? Basically, over five-year contracts are out, as are less than one-year deals. Spoilsports.

PROTECTION RACKET The new transfer rules give players more freedom while clubs are left in the mire.
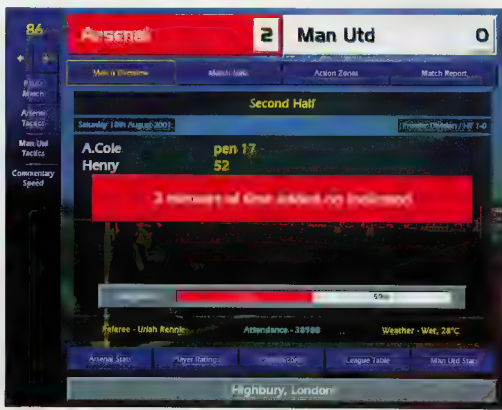
BLOW THE WHISTLE! Surely it's three points in the bag for Arsenal, but you wouldn't rule out a two-goal blitz from Utd. Especially when Fergie is arguing for a further 15 minutes of time.

BEST 11
'CM4 WISH-LIST'

Sol Campbell ~ Jaap Stam
Age 26, English ~ Age 29, Dutch

Acceleration		Handling	0	Strength
Aggression		Heading		Tackling
Agility		Influence		Teamwork
Anticipation		Jumping		Technique
Balance		Long Shots		Work Rate
Bravery		Marking		Preferred Foot
Creativity		Off The Ball		Avg. Rating
Crossing		Pace		Morale
Decisions	0	Passing		
Determination		Positioning	0	Goals
Dribbling		Reflexes		Appearances
Finishing		Set Pieces		Assists
Flair		Stamina		Man of Match

Goalkeeper	n/a	Def. Mid.	w/e
Full Back	n/a	Midfielder	w/e
Centre Back		Att. Mid.	w/e
Sweeper		Winger	w/e
Wing Back		Striker	w/e

Legend:
Sol Campbell's Better | Both the same | Jaap Stam's Better

D C ~ SW/D C

NEXT

TOP TRUMP Arguably the most revealing aspect of comparing two players is who's better playing in specific positions. Here they're both equally as good at centre back but Stam leads the way as a sweeper

and there's the ability to search for promising current or future ability.

LIQUID FOOTBALL Making notes on players and then setting reminders is a little pointless because most CM managers are already obsessive and retentive enough when shopping for transfer targets or renewing contracts. Similarly, comparing any two players is really only worthwhile when coaching a Premiership club, where the luxury of signing either Marcelo Salas or Patrick Kluivert might

GOAL CRAZY
An average of 40+
afternoon just isn't
realistic and neither
are the ridiculous 20+
attempts on goal
almost every match.

require a quick stat comparison or check on how adaptable they are for different positions. It's not often lower division sides have two similar players wanting to join, let alone players with skill!

Improvements to match commentary are still not enough to really give you a sense of where players are on the pitch and their relation to the ball. Hints are now given to alter things around or exploit weaknesses, such as which players are winning everything in the air, which are struggling to keep up with play,

defenders not picking up runs from attacking midfielders and how much time is to be added on for that final assault or last-gasp defending. These are great but there's still the tendency for the commentary to start describing a move and then cut off without explanation. Those hair-tearing moments when you know the opposition will score regardless of your tactics are also back.

It's likely you'll now struggle to take a sleeping giant or minnow to the Champions League final in successive seasons. 01/02 is a massive leap in difficulty, with away games especially hard to take a point from, and enticing decent players virtually impossible in life outside the Premiership. Thankfully the stats for top players are toned down by three or four marks in most areas. However, the amount of chances created and goals scored remains a major issue and one which particularly blights the lower leagues. An average of 40+ goals per Saturday afternoon just isn't realistic and neither are the ridiculous 20+ attempts on goal almost every match.

We're all for hitting the onion bag as many times as possible, but wouldn't it be nice to grind out a goalless draw from time to time by virtue of your tactical nous and not simply rely on that other CM staple unbeatable 'keepers?

PCG ■

Max Rowe News

Monday 22.Oct.01

Continue Game			
Max Rowe			
Competition			
Nations & Clubs			
Find			
Change Player			
Game Options			

Sun 21th Oct EVE | Swindon appoint Brown as manager
Sat 20th Oct PM | Board reaction to derby match
Sat 20th Oct PM | Luzhniy banned for 3 matches
Sat 20th Oct PM | Kanu selected for Nigeria match

Filter :

Man City manager given ultimatum by board

The Manchester City board appear to finally be losing patience with manager Kevin Keegan.

It is rumoured in the press that a bad result against Norwich City in the forthcoming First Division match could cost him his job.

You Have News

Contracts and Media | Transfers | Jobs | Records

NEXT

LOVING IT Oh dear. Only a few weeks into the season and KK is already struggling to hold down a job. Perhaps he should make a last stand and issue an ultimatum to the board, asking for extra cash to strengthen the squad.
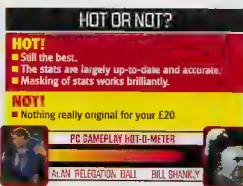
RED FACTION

WORDS jon brown

PITCH & BITCH

"What do we want?"

"Red Faction."

"When do we want it?"

"Now!"

Hang on a minute, aren't you supposed to be the cynical one, always playing devil's advocate and hating everything? You're not allowed to be excited by a game.

Oh bugger, that's right. It's just that I've played Red Faction, and I have to admit, even I was impressed.

Really? Blimey, it must be good.

Oh it is. At last, a game that can genuinely claim to better Half-Life in every respect.

Are you feeling alright? I don't think I like the new you. Can you go back to being a bitter, bile-spewing whiner?

OK then, hand me that copy of Max Payne.

THIS HALF-LIFE BEATER IS DEFINITELY RED HOT.

Eight issues ago, in a galaxy far, far away, PC GAMEPLAY announced the development of a title that we brazenly claimed had the potential to blow holes in the heavenly Half-Life and nonchalantly force a rocket up the nose of the untouchable Unreal. But then it all went quiet. The game went underground and disappeared from our radars completely, leaving us desperately clinging to the cliché 'no news is good news' like a crash survivor hugging a flotation device in the middle of the ice-cold Atlantic. Fear not, for it has finally resurfaced, and in the very same watershed issue that the notorious Max Payne decides to finally turn himself in, we can officially confirm that Red Faction is every inch a Half-Life beater.

First and foremost, for those of you whose memories don't stretch back to January (or worse still, who've only just discovered this oasis of gaming knowledge), a couple of words on Red Faction's narrative. Total Recall. A few more? OK: the player controls Parker, an idealistic individual who joins a mining colony on Mars and immediately joins a militant

ROCKET MEN It's not just Parker who gets to blow holes in things with the almighty rocket launcher.

group – the eponymous Red Faction – in an armed uprising against their oppressive paymasters. With the help of a cast of impressively detailed supporting characters, it's up to Parker to bring the shady figure of Ultor to justice and uncover the source of a deadly plague that's been mysteriously striking down the workforce.

Enough. You want to hear about the scenery, right? Blowing holes in walls, knocking out bridges, topping over towers, all that gubbins. Well, no matter how many times you've read about it, the very first time you take a rocket launcher to a wall with the intention of conducting a little interior design, it'll still leave you gasping, first taking a chunk out of it, then pummelling further and further through until you've smashed into another

A TOUCH OF GLASS After furiously playing through Red Faction, we're certain that it's going to fulfil its awesome potential. Powered by the Geo-Mod engine, the environmental damage is nothing short of superb.

area of the level. The damage isn't pre-rendered either, rather calculated using Volition's sparking Geo-Mod engine which calculates the damage done to any surface depending on your proximity to it and the type of weapon you're using.

When the deafening clatter of gunfire has died down, the screen has stopped shaking with the kickback from your submachine gun and every last one of Ultor's guards has been turned into offal, the amount of damage you've done to the surrounding environment will leave you all warm and tingly with pride. "I made that hole you know."

With the serious implications of the Geo-Mod technology, it's a good job that the levels have been very carefully designed, and

FIVE MINUTES IN... RED FACTION

AFTER CRASH LANDING IN AN ESCAPE POD, PARKER IS MET BY A MEMBER OF THE RED FACTION...

... WHO UNKNOWINGLY LEADS HIM INTO AN AMBUSH. LUCKILY HE TAKES THE BULLET ... YOU DON'T HAVE TO

YOU ARE CALLED FOR ASSISTANCE NEARBY WHERE TWO MINERS ARE PINNED DOWN BY ENEMY FIRE...

BETTER DEAD THAN RED A dedicated member of the Red Faction clashes with one of Ultor's henchmen during the co-ordinated siege on the rebel base.
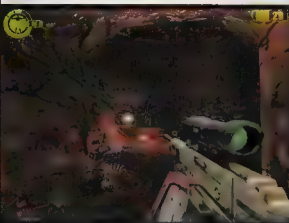
PLAY WITH FIRE Of all Red Faction's weapons, it's the flame thrower that really caught our eye. Once you've set an enemy alight, stand back and watch as they thrash about in the most terrible pain imaginable. Ouch.

WALLS COME TUMBLIN' DOWN Pummel away at the rock face and you've made your own hideout.

blasting alone won't necessarily provide you with all the answers. Certain walls cannot be destroyed, and there is the odd occasion where you're required to lay down your arms and engage the brain. But it's not the puzzles that are the biggest challenge, it's the swarms of devious guards co-ordinating their efforts against you. Wound a soldier and he'll attempt to retreat, calling for back up as he vainly attempts to limp for cover from an incoming rocket. Guards duck for cover while they reload and will frequently jump behind walls in search of asylum from your hail of bullets

RED CARPET TREATMENT What's equally impressive is the way the game's innovations are weaved together to form a coherent whole, not just thrown in mindlessly as is the case with the majority of action games. The

vehicles, for instance, are integral to the completion of each section, and while the handling of some of them is slightly suspect (the jeep in particular), they succeed in adding an extra dimension to the action. On entering a mining area deep underground, we hi-jacked a jeep — not before we'd taken full advantage of the rear mounted cannon — drove it as far as a broken bridge, then plunged into the water, broke into a mini-sub and immediately engaged in an underwater dogfight. The game is full of fantastically executed set pieces, such as the attack on the rebel base (see panel) and the thrilling jail-break, which sees a group of miners sent in to free you from your captors. It stirs emotions untouched since you first clapped eyes on Valve's pace-setting first-person shooter

Red Faction is truly breathtaking, and

with Unreal 2, Return to Castle Wolfenstein and Halo still some time off, it looks a certainty to hang on to the Best in Class ribbon for the foreseeable future. The PlayStation 2 launch was blighted by claims that the Geo-Mod device wasn't used quite as heavily or effectively as it could've been and that some of the later weapons (the Rail Driver in particular) disturbed the balance of the gameplay, so hopefully these warnings have been heeded and the PC version can lay these ghosts to rest

PCG ■

JEEPERS CREEPERS! As this helpful chap is going to drive, you're free to man the rear-mounted cannon.

ACHOO! Parker gets sneezed on by a particularly fearsome foe deep in the heart of Ultor's mine.

HOT OR NOT?

HOT!
■ Nothing quite like blowing your way through a wall.
■ Vehicles play a crucial role in the action.
■ An unrivalled arsenal of weapons and great story.

NOT!
■ Hopefully Geo-Mod will be exploited to the full

PC GAMEPLAY HOT-O-METER

ARTHUR   ARNIE

THERE'S A ROCKET LAUNCHER AHEAD, BUT THE GUARDS ON THE BRIDGE ARE PEPPERING IT WITH FIRE

ONCE YOU'VE TAKEN OUT THE SNIPER AND GRABBED IT, FIRE ROCKETS EITHER END OF THE BRIDGE...

AND WATCH IT COME FALLING DOWN, TAKING THE GUARDS DOWN WITH IT AND LEAVING YOU FREE TO PASS THROUGH

DEVELOPING A

Amusement parks, cities and Caribbean islands all have one thing in common: they need to be developed to be successful. The same can be said for games. PC GAMEPLAY presents the most interesting new advancements in the empire-building genre and reveals secret projects.

They are called Rollercoaster Tycoon, Sim City 3000, Tropico and Caesar 3 and they belong to one of the few genres that work all over the world (especially in America). They unite beginners and professional gamers alike, as well as fans of all ages and both sexes. They are called empire-building games and they often remain at the top of the charts for months – or, in the case of The Sims, years – whereas other games disappear after just a few weeks and are deleted from hard drives.

The trend kicked off in the early 1990s with classics such as Sim City and Railroad Tycoon. Peter Molyneux' Theme Park, Blue Bytes' Settlers series and, of course, Sim City 3000 took the genre forward with ever better graphics, increased depth and a lot of gaming fun. Recent highlights have included Anno 1602, which broke all records in the German-speaking world, and Rollercoaster Tycoon, the most successful game worldwide last year. But what makes these games so popular? PC GAMEPLAY presents the five decisive criteria for good (and successful) empire development games.

CONVINCE THE INTENSIVE PLAYER

What the strategy pro enjoys playing can be recommended for others. Well-made strategy games give the player enormous freedom – and news of these things spreads extremely fast by word of mouth. Anno 1602 and Rollercoaster Tycoon were badly under-estimated at first; but once players installed the games they were quickly hooked. It's important for empire-building games to be accessible to the masses, but in-depth enough to satisfy the hardcore gamer.

SET THE HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS AS LOW AS POSSIBLE

A game like Rollercoaster Tycoon runs perfectly well on a 100MHz machine and doesn't need a 3D graphics card, so it can be played on PCs that are up to four or five years old. This immediately opens the game up to a much wider audience and helps guarantee a major hit.

The down side of this is that empire-building games are rarely at the forefront of technological progress, but the beautifully modelled Anno 1503 buildings receive a nod of appreciation.

TEEMING WITH LIFE

Figures, tables, menus within menus – things that were once acceptable are now definitely out. Modern empire-building games integrate the information directly into the game

CAESAR 2

THE SETTLERS 2

INDUSTRY GIANT

ANNO 1602

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON

THE SIMS

NEW GENERATION

words petra maueroder

graphics. This can be most cleany seen in the new generation of empire-building games, such as Monopoly Tycoon, which allow you to call up information by simply clicking on peope or buildings.

A high teeming factor is a sign of quality, because if you're not building you can simply watch white cars and buses drive through the towns, visitors crowd into the zoo or millers carry sacks of flour to the bakery. The more there is going on, the better – although players should never be swamped with too much happening on screen at once

AVOID VIOLENCE

Surveys show that most Anno 1602 players hate nothing more than the annoying pirate attacks on their sailing ships and towns Empire builders would rather not fight at all After taking so much time to develop settlements, the last thing they want is to have them destroyed. In almost all the most successful empire-building games, there is no combat. In those that games that do feature combat, it's usually a peripheral element of the game

MODERN EMPIRE-BUILDING GAMES INTEGRATE THE INFO DIRECTLY INTO THE GAME GRAPHICS

AVOID BUGS

For the experienced PC player patches are a frustrating, but everyday evil. However, occasional players (who account for a large proportion of the buyers of these kinds of games) have no understanding of programme errors. It is certainly no coincidence that games such as Rollercoaster Tycoon, Sim City 3000 and Pharaon haven't had to be patched dozens of times, unlike some games we can think of

Despite exciting announcements, developers have by no means exhausted all the possibilities where themes are concerned What about Sim Circus, Supermarket Tycoon or a multiplex cinema game? The tourism theme will soon be revisited Inonics is working on Holiday Tycoon

The following pages show what fans of the genre can look forward to over the next few months. The games are ranked according to the likelihood of them becoming classics We've not been able to include everything (we'd need a whole magazine), but it serves as a taster of the great things to come.

SECRET PROJECTS

We ask the question: What about... ?

... Holiday Island 2?
Sunflowers is noncommittal "When deciding which projects our future team will work on, we are considering var ous games. Of course, we will also be considering a potentia sequel to Hol day Island "

... Rollercoaster Tycoon 2?
Chris Sawyer is working on two projects: "I am certain that there wil l be a Rollercoaster Tycoon 2 but not for many years It's not possible to get more details out of PCs and keep the performance acceptable."

... Sim City 4000?
Not announced, but in progress! However, Sim City inventor Will Wright is working on Sims Online and Sims Ville

... Railroad Tycoon 3?
Phil Ste nmeyer of Pop Top: "Our next game wil l use a 3D engine I believe that our fans worldw de wil be very happy" Can be taken as a 'yes

...The Settlers 5?
The preparations have begun Blue Byte s promising significant improvements compared w th Settlers I to 4

...Theme Park 3?
Theme Park World offered too much 3D and not enough game depth There are current y no plans for a sequel!
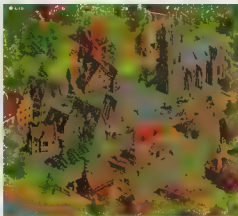
1ST PLACE

Simsville

Ever wondered what your Sims get up to when they aren't lifting weights and holding parties? The action takes place in a city suburb where you build blocks of flats, supermarkets, restaurants, police stations, cinemas, schools and fire stations and extend the road network. You attract more taxpayers into your district by offering a wide range of entertainment and well-paid jobs.

COOLEST FEATURE

Do you have Sims characters and families on your hard drive? If so, you can import them into the game, where they will appear as neighbours, complete with their original abilities. You can click on every Sim on the pavements and in the shops and find out what they need. Is this man in need of a fitness studio? Is he bored? You can also call up the budget of every household.

MISSIONS & CAMPAIGNS

The continuous play mode is the main focus of Simsville. Your district should flourish and the economy boom. It's important to take account of your Sims families' abilities. For instance, if you build a university you will be able to fill more demanding positions in banks, laboratories and offices. The better off your people are, the more they will demand boutiques and entertainment.

GRAPHICS

Looks a bit like a painting with its pastel colours, but it is a proper 3D map that you can rotate and zoom in on. You can see the state of the houses and shops from their façades: Dirty windows, tattered curtains, dimly lit bars and shady characters frighten off potential residents. Well-kept gardens with swimming pools symbolise a healthy (and wealthy) suburb.

Developer: Max's
Distributor: Electronic Arts
Release date: January 2002

2ND PLACE

Anno 1503

The developer could have made things easy for itself with the sequel to Anno 1602: slightly improved graphics, a few more products, a few more buildings and voilà. But Sunflowers isn't Blue Byte. Anno 1503 will boast nine cultures, 40 production chains, a completely new military system and much more complex economic cycles (complete report on page 48). Many of the new features originated in the thick files of fan mail.

Using a technology tree, you can get the monks in the monastic schools to research or improve buildings, goods and processes (extracting salt, dying wool, etc.). In this way you can increase the productivity of your hop fields or the quality of your swords. Research is paid for with books, which are made by the paper-maker and printer.

The campaign sends you on a journey around the world. At the South Pole you meet whale-hunting Eskimos, in the Orient people sell you exotic spices and on Caribbean islands you cultivate sugar cane and cocoa. If you want, you can also fight. Fight material includes battering rams, cannons, warships, cavalry and swordsmen. Of course, the popular continuous play mode is still there.

Anno 1503 sets new graphics standards for empire-building games. Scenes that look great in pictures turn into living worlds in the game: extremely detailed buildings (based on historic models), wonderfully animated surf, graceful sailing ships, 50 types of animal (flamingos, penguins etc.) — all in three zoom levels from four angles and in resolutions only limited by the graphics card.

Developer: Sunflowers/Max Design
Distributor: Electronic Arts
Release date: November 2001

3RD PLACE

Zoo Tycoon

Here's a Gerald Durrell version of Rollercoaster Tycoon. As zoo director you only make a profit if both the animals and the visitors are happy. 40 types of animal (giraffes, camels, crocodiles, rhinos etc.) require a comfortable home, which you click together from hundreds of floor coverings, plants, fences and houses. Well-placed kiosks, toilets and park benches encourage your visitors to stay longer.

If you want to see action, just leave the bear's cage open, or put an antelope in the lion's enclosure. Leaving aside twisted animal experiments, you should generally look out for the small details: If you put trees too close to the fence, the gorillas will climb over.

When you aren't pulling a loss-making zoo back onto its feet, your task could be to ensure that the panda couple produces a panda baby. In the continuous play mode you develop your animal park without time limits — including a touch & feel zoo for small children, a tropical house with giant cobras and a reconstructed mountain range for ibex.

Comparable with Rollercoaster Tycoon in all respects: Lots of nice details (lions sprawl in the grass, seals fool around, dolphins leap out of the pool), but technically no longer up to date. As soon as the bare site has been planted with trees, bushes and palms, though, this drawback is hardly an issue. As in Sim City 3000, the terrain can be raised and lowered.

Developer: Blue Fang Games
Distributor: Microsoft
Release date: October 2001

Sim Golf

Far West

Industry Giant 2

You only know Tiger Woods from the Frosties box and think an eagle's the member of a rock group? Doesn't matter – you can play Sim Golf even if you don't know anything about the game. In this game you design, build and run golf courses. You set up restaurants, shops, hotels, practice courses, install ball washing machines, take on golf trainers and caretakers and hire out golf carts to your visitors.

As a farmer in the Wild West you raise cattle, hire cowboys with different strengths and weaknesses, defend your pastureland, build water reservoirs, supply your employees with whisky, coffee, beans, weapons and ammunition, buy horses, put money in the bank and expand your farm. The most important building is your ranch. Its size and level of development determines your prestige.

Wheelbarrows, industrial steel, tennis racquets, tinned fruit or clothes? Trucks, aircraft, trains? These are the decisions you will face as industry giant in the second part of this empire-building classic. First you build factories, farms and department stores, then you link them with truck routes and railway lines. You win by offering cheaper, more modern and greater quantities of goods than the competition.

You can swing a club yourself using the mouse to adjust the strength and direction – you will need sensitive fingers. If you're successful, you will gain experience points and can train yourself up Diablo-like to become a golf pro. You can then distribute your experience points to individual abilities, like putting, driving or chipping, thereby improving your personal handicap.

Indians, bank robberies, pasture wars with neighbouring farms – as you'd expect, there will be the occasional conflict. When this happens you position your cowboys tactically and aim with the mouse at the enemy. The crosshair will wobble depending on the shooting skills of your cowboys. You can replace tragic losses and a time limit ensures speed and action.

The changing seasons affect the consumers' buying patterns. Bright red Wellington boots are only bought in spring and summer, skis only in winter. Intelligent stock keeping and careful production management are everything. Technological development is also decisive. As soon as electrical toys appear on the market, the demand for teddy bears and dolls falls dramatically.

In the sandpit mode you can really let rip. It's up to you whether you turn your golf course into an exclusive club for the well-off (complete with hefty membership fees) or whether you let everyone in. The greatest honour is if the PGA pros stop off at your course for a tournament. The official Sim Golf website lets you swap courses with other players.

Besides Indians, your animals are threatened by thieves, epidemics, droughts and packs of wolves. In the multiplayer mode up to four ranchers can fight over the cattle. While you concentrate on cattle raising at first, later in the game you can influence public opinion in your position as newspaper publisher, open your own saloon or speed up cattle sales by investing in the railways.

In the continuous play mode you start at any time between 1900 and 1980. In the scenarios the time period is preset. Your task will be to turn around ailing businesses, to control the beer market as a monopolist or to bring the obsolete product range of an electronics chain up to date. You will find more information on Industry Giant 2 in next month's issue.

Sand bunkers, greens, buildings and green spaces have a 3D appearance and are extremely detailed. The four landscapes are very different. On Hawaii, for instance, you play on lava rock in the middle of a tropical paradise. Using an editor you can change the golfers' appearance and speech. Firaxis promises a constant online supply of new golf course additions.

Far West is a 3D game, but is played from the isometric bird's eye perspective. The map contains several towns. The countryside, cacti, buildings, cows and cowboys have all been designed as 3D objects, which means that you can pan, rotate and zoom in on them. The minimum hardware requirements account for this: Pentium with 700MHz, 128MB memory and 3D card.

Veteran cars chug through the streets, container ships dock in the harbour, trains wind through forests, iron ore is mined between steep rocks – a fully developed Industry Giant 2 map has a similar charm to a model railway set. The towns keep growing so their appearance changes too.

Developer: Firaxis
Distributor: Electronic Arts
Release date: November 2001

Developer: Greenwood Entertainment
Distributor: Phenomedia
Release date: March 2002

Developer: Jowood Productions
Distributor: Jowood Productions
Release date: November 2001

reviews

At PC GAMEPLAY we know what a minefield buying a new game can be. It's not just about whether the game's any good or not, but also whether it'll work okay on your PC. That's why we've created the most in-depth and authoritative review system in the market, so you can be sure that a game's going to ring your bell before parting with the readies.

HOW THE PC GAMEPLAY REVIEW SYSTEM WORKS

step 1

When one of the PC GAMEPLAY team is given a game to review, they are also given a comprehensive 12-page 'PC GAMEPLAY Game Appraisal' document to fill in. This detailed document acts as a sort of reviewer's 'checklist' and covers every key element of a game, from the obvious - like Graphics, Sound and Level/Mission Design - to the less visible but vital aspects such as Interface/Control, Game Structure/Design, Opponent Intelligence/Behaviour and so on. As the game is played the reviewer gradually fills in the Appraisal document, which then forms the basis for the final published review.

step 2

While the reviewer is writing their review, the game is sent to our hardware Test Labs. Here it is tested on no less than 32 different PC set-ups. The resulting data is then used to assess the game's minimum and recommended specification - we just don't trust what the publishers consider to be the 'minimum and recommended' specs! - and is printed in full in the big reviews, giving you an at-a-glance indicator of how well the game's likely to run on your PC at home. Oh, and for the minimum specification set-up we also provide information on how to optimise the game's performance in the 'How Low Can You Go?' panel.

step 3

Once the reviewer has collated the Performance Testing data with their review (making amendments where testing has highlighted any problems not apparent on their PC), it is finally submitted to the Editor. The Appraisal document and the Performance Testing results are also handed in so that the Editor can make sure that no important details have been omitted. The Editor also liaises with other team-members who have played the game, to ensure that the criticisms are valid. Once the Editor has checked over the review, it is approved for publishing. Phew! And you thought we just played games all day long!

GOLD AWARD
We give the PC GAMEPLAY Gold Award to any game scoring 8 or 9 out of 10. This is your guarantee of a good time. Immediate purchasing is recommended.

PLATINUM AWARD
If a game scores 10 out of 10, it receives the coveted PC GAMEPLAY Platinum Award. If you see one of these, you're looking at a gaming masterpiece.

How we score	1	2 - 3	4 - 5	6 - 7	8 - 9	10
We mark a little tougher than other PC games magazines out there, but that's because we know games are a massive investment of your time and money. Here's what the scores break down as.	**TERRIBLE**	**POOR**	**OKAY**	**GOOD**	**EXCELLENT**	**CLASSIC**
	If you see this game, run away and have a long hot shower to cleanse yourself.	The game is deeply, seriously flawed and not really worthy of consideration.	The game has problems but might be worth checking if you like the look of it.	Definitely worth a look, especially if the game's in a genre that you enjoy.	No matter what your tastes, the game offers lots of great entertainment.	The pinnacle of PC gaming. Don't hesitate in snapping it up! You MUST play it!

MAX PAYNE

It's done! After an agonising birth that tried the patience of even the most dedicated members of his burgeoning fan base, Mr Payne finally leaps out of the shadows with his dual Ingrams blazing. Turn to page 66 for the only verdict you need.

REVIEWED THIS MONTH

Don't be fooled into thinking that Max Payne is the only game worthy of your cash this month, as while all eyes have been trained on the arrival of the grimacing slow-mo detective, Codename: Outbreak, Orion Pirates and Arcanum have all crept in.
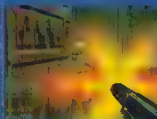
CODENAME: OUTBREAK Another first person contender on page 78.

ARCANUM An RPG from the Fallout team. See it on page 82.

SHEEP DOG N' WOLF Copious crazy cartoon capers on page 72.
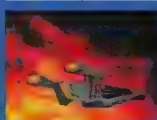
ORION PIRATES Deep space strategy for Trekkies on page 84.

GP3 SEASON 2000 Updated data for your racing pleasure. But will it remain at the top of the podium, or will EA's imminent F1 2001 steal its thunder? Page 88.

MAX PAYNE

GAME GLANCE

The wait is over at last. A third-person action game featuring plenty of slow motion shootouts, cinematic cut sequences and comic book style panels. Battle through a single New York night in a bid to clear Max Payne's name

■ 23 chapters
■ 15 weapons
■ 10-15 hrs gameplay
■ 4 years in the making
■ Over 10 New York Minute

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

450MHz Pentium 2
16MB RAM
16MB 3D card

There have been reports of owners of lower spec having lock-up problems, but this rig should get him going, just don't expect much in the way of frames per second. The range of visual options is very impressive and with a little tinkering you might be able to get some pleasure from Payne.

You are now entering a world of Payne. And we mean that literally.

Max Payne is having a bad day. Framed for the murder of a close friend and associate, Payne stands silent in an elevator somewhere in the belly of a hot New York night, unsafe in the knowledge that the

getting close to the slime responsible for the death of his family.

With this in mind, it's of no surprise that the tinny supermarket muzak being pumped into the stuffy elevator like a noxious gas has rubbed Max up the wrong way. Raising his pump-action shotgun, Payne swivels and sends a perfectly aimed

> PAYNE IS STAKING OUT A SUBWAY STATION WHEN HE WITNESSES THE SHOOTING OF HIS CLOSE FRIEND ALEX

NYPD are actively seeking him and that the entire might of the local Mafioso is committed to hunting him down and wiping that permanent grimace off his face. He's covered in blood, heavily wounded and starting to feel the psychological effects of

bullet through the offending speaker, cutting off the music in an instant. "Thank you," croaks Max in his gravelly drawl.

It's moments like this when all the concerns you've secretly harboured that maybe Max Payne wasn't going to be the

golden gaming nugget that some had predrift off into the ether faster than the smoke from the barrel of a pump-action shotgun. Indeed, for the first half an hour of play, it's easy to be conned into believing that Remedy has achieved the impossible and created the stunning game to

accompany the phenomenal visuals. Alas, it soon becomes clear that this is a mirage. The more you play Max Payne the more apparent it becomes that it is a one-trick pony, all mouth and no trousers, a classic case of style over substance.

The action begins with a flashback three years into the past and Max arriving home

to discover the lifeless bodies of his wife and only child. Back in the present day, Payne, now an undercover cop working for the DEA, is staking out a subway station monitoring the flow of a drug known as Valkyr when he witnesses the shooting of his close friend Alex. Spotted leaving the scene of the crime, Payne is immediately placed at the head of the NYPD's most wanted list and forced to turn vigilante if he is to escape with his life and clear his name.

Unfortunately, this genuinely intriguing noir-ish premise is let down by the clichéd nature of the characters and some truly cringeworthy dialogue, with the end result that Payne's actual character never comes close to matching his photo-realistic visage

in terms of depth and believability. If there's any scope for involvement with this story, it's purely on a Chuck Norris level.

Max Payne's unique selling point has always been what boffins call 'Bullet-Time', what film buffs call 'that bit from the Matrix' and what the rest of us call 'slow motion'. As you've no doubt heard by now, by right clicking the mouse you can activate the Bullet-Time mode which slows the action down but still allows you to fire and move your crosshair at the normal speed, thus giving you a valuable advantage over your enemy. Better still, by combining the Bullet-Time skill with a direction key, Max can perform a 'Shot-dodge' – essentially a super slow-mo dive best used to enter rooms heaving with Mafioso.

These spectacular entrances are Payne's stock in trade, and as great as they are, by the time you've reached the halfway mark

PAYNE IN THE SIDE The Shot-Dodge, pictured here, plays [...] ble as you progress through the game. Bullet-Time is finite, so use [...]

[...] ere's no doubting that this is an [...] ly, there's precious little substance

THE HOUSE OF PAYNE If you can complete the game on Fugitive mode, then again on Hard-Boiled mode and once again on Dead on Arrival, you are rewarded with this secret arena jam-packed with bad guys for you to play with. Defeat this horde of evil swines to gain access to a gallery of photos of the development team. And you thought playing games was a waste of time!

GIVE ME A MINUTE

>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

Completing the game for the first time opens up the New York Minute mode which gives you a single minute to complete the game and then awards you extra time for every enemy that you take out. It's an interesting idea but one unlikely to encourage you to trawl through the entire game for a second time unless you were head over heels with it in the first place. Finish it again and you open up the Dead on Arrival mode which limits you to seven saves per level.

>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

TIME TO KILL That tiny clock in the top right-hand corner is your reward for completing Payne

you begin to tire of the ritual of diving through doorways to find three henchmen waiting for you, then activating the Bullet-Time and methodically taking them out. Respect is due to Max for trying something different, and there's no doubt that this device certainly adds another dimension to the game, it's just that the novelty wears off very quickly due to the over-reliance on this single trick.
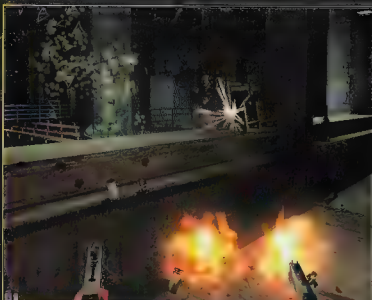
NO PAYNE NO GAIN The level of artificial intelligence in Max Payne is one major issue. Sometimes guards don't react to your gunfire or run blindly into ambushes.

As we all know, Max Payne is an incredibly beautiful game. The spectacle of leaping horizontally with your Desert Eagle spewing hot pellets into the torsos of the writhing guards, while bullets whistle past your head and into the surrounding televisions, bottles and windows has to be seen to be believed. As well as featuring deformable objects – water coolers can be punctured, fire extinguishers burst, pipes ruptured – Payne can interact with almost every object in the game and it's clear Remedy has gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure that this is one of the most authentic game environments ever seen.

Another plus point is the great audio, which is every inch the equal of the game's gleaming exterior. Guards talk among themselves at impressive length, the gun battles are suitably noisy and the ear-piercing explosions will shake your PC like an earthquake. The only criticism here is the soundtrack which, for a game that attempts to be as much like a film as possible, is lightweight and disappointingly never used in synchrony with the action.

And now onto the burning question – is the game too short? In a word, yes. PC GAMEPLAY clocked in at 11 hours 23 minutes, and in an age where the typical developer aims for a minimum length of

MAGIC BULLET The sniper rifle gives you a bullet-eye view of your projectile as it heads toward its target. Max Payne is full of these heavily stylised touches.

OPEN FIRE In one of the weaker levels, Payne must escape from Punchinello's restaurant, which has been set ablaze by a vicious mobster. As with the majority of the game, it's completely linear and tightly scripted.

around 40 hours, Payne is unforgivably brief. Completing it once opens up the New York minute mode (see panel) as well as the Hard-Boiled setting (which lessens the auto aim and Max's powers of recovery) but these variations are insufficient

Considering Max Payne's diminutive stature, this is wholly unforgivable.

THE FINAL WORD On the odd occasion when you can catch a glimpse of the real Max Payne through all the smoke and the

JUMP START The third-person view does cause a few problems, most notably with camera, which is occasionally obstructed by Payne's head and shoulders.

TAKE AWAY THE SMOKE AND MIRRORS AND PAYNE IS AN ABOVE-AVERAGE GAME WITH A SERIOUS EGO PROBLEM

compensation for another couple of levels.

The problem isn't just that the game is too short, it's also that it's too forgiving, too willing to drop you ham-fisted hints and all too ready to force energy-restoring painkillers down your neck. Another couple of problems are the cockeyed collision detection, which registers enemy hits from around corners, and the extremely suspect artificial intelligence. Some sections of the game are poorly designed and insubstantial (the pair of lame dream sequences that appear to have been levered in at the last minute are a case in point) and there's a lack of visual variety throughout the game.

mirrors and slow-motion trickery, what you see is an above-average action game with a serious ego problem. In truth it was always going to be a monumental task for Remedy to match their next-generation visuals with a truly revolutionary game, and in the end it has proved a bridge too far. And while the game positively shines on the outside, once you scratch away at the surface you find precious little in the way of substance. After eluding capture for so long it's time for Payne to face up to his heinous crime. He stands accused of being a charlatan, a fraudster, and, most damningly of all, just another face in the crowd.

FEEL THE PAYNE The character animations are fantastic and go some way towards explaining the game's 15 certificate. This really isn't one for the kiddies.
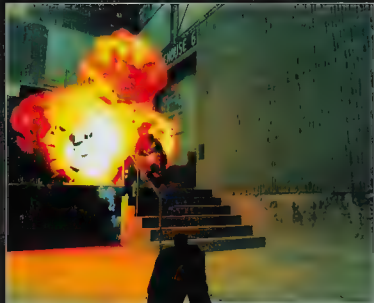
FISH IN A BARREL Never one to shy away from a gaming cliche, Max Payne features plenty of guards standing next to explosive barrels. Will they never learn?

VERDICT
MAX PAYNE

TECH SPEC
- Minimum 450MHz Pentium 2 96MB RAM 16MB 3D Card
- Recommended 700MHz Pentium 2 128MB RAM 32MB 3D
- Graphics Software ✗ · Direct3D ✗ · Glide ✓ · OpenGL ✗
- Sound EAX (SBLive!) ✓ Aureal 3D ✓ Dolby Surround ✗

MULTIPLAYER ■ Maximum number of players PC - 1 LAN - n/a Internet n/a
■ Number of players per CD ■ CDs supplied with game n/a ■ Minimum modem speed n/a

MULTIPLAYER RATING n/a

HOW IT COMPARES

■ **Half-Life**
Payne's too short and one-dimensional to topple Valve's masterpiece

■ **Hitman: Codename 47**
Similar perspective but totally different in terms of immediacy and depth

■ **Max Payne**
The actual game was never going to live up to the quality of the visuals.

■ **Tomb Raider Chronicles**
At its very worst, Max Payne resembles a bitter installment from the TR series

PROS & CONS

➕ A visual firework display if you've got a big enough machine.

➕ Bullet Time is a great device that adds another level to the game.

➕ Hundreds of great touches and a fantastic audio track.

➖ Too short and too easy. Dynamic skill setting is a touch suspect.

➖ Gunfights start to get repetitive once you've tired of the visuals.

➖ Patchy artificial intelligence and inaccurate collision detection.

OVERALL
Considering its potential, Max Payne is a massive disappointment.

7

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Publisher: **Take Two Interactive** ■ Developer: **Terminal Reality** ■ http://fly.godgames.com

FLY! 2

WORDS scott mongomery

Ever fancied a plane without guns? Well, take to the skies in Fly! 2 and... er... fly around.

GAME GLANCE

Take the controls of a variety of civilian aircraft, then take off. Learn to navigate and fly around the world

- 7 civilian aircraft
- 3 different helicopters
- 5 hi-res cities
- 60 miles of visibility
- Hours of flying fun.

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

233MHz Pentium
32MB RAM
4MB 3D card

Although the options are scalable raising the detail bogs the game down, and as the settings are by default set fairly low, there's not much room to speed things up either. Frustrating

If there's one thing you don't ever want to do on your home PC, it's print out over 330 pages of a manual. But if you buy Fly! 2, Take Two's latest civilian flight simulation, that's exactly what you'll be expected to do.

The problem seems to stem from the fact that nowadays we get our games in stylish and snappy looking DVD boxes. But surely in the case of hard core flight simulations this trend must be bucked. We don't want to minimise a game to check the electronic manual. We want a hard copy to leaf through! If you are experienced enough to fly without a manual, this omission may be of little relevance, but if you are new to the genre, the included 26 pages will soon prove inadequate and you'll be forced into printing the manual.

This European release does come with a scenery disc, which includes high-resolution scenery for five cities (including Washington DC and Paris), as well as a conversion for the Bell helicopter that allows you to land it on water. But despite these extras, you just can't escape

NICE BRIDGE To the game's credit, the exteriors look spectacular as you swoosh around showing off.

CLOUDED If you like planes, helicopters and all things peaceful and airborne, you'll probably get a kick from Fly! 2. To the rest, Survivor is probably more fun .

HARSH WORLDS Some of the scenery can become a bit blocky and uninteresting at times.

LOTS OF NUMBERS Buffs will foam at the mouth over the accurate and detailed plane dashboards.

the feeling that you're not getting a good value product with Fly! 2.

One of the more unfortunate aspects of the title is the bland scenery. At low altitudes it is unforgivably blocky, and you can't bump up the detail even on high spec machines. In stark contrast to the scenery, the aircraft (three helicopters and seven planes to choose from) are incredibly detailed, so things like fly-bys look incredible. But this visual superiority of the aircraft highlights the poor scenery.

The actual flight characteristics seem pretty good overall, although strangely you can drag the wings of your aircraft 30 feet across the runway and still manage a recovery, while the

rotors of the helicopters will happily rotate through the ground with little noticeable effect. Even when you set the realism settings to maximum, your aircraft will take huge amounts of punishment and keep on flying. It seems unlikely that what happens in Fly! 2 reflects how real aircraft react to the ground.

THE FINAL WORD With such obvious flaws, it's hard to recommend Fly! 2, especially when there are other better examples of the genre available, e.g. Flight Unlimited 3 or Microsoft's Flight Simulator 2000. Our recommendation is to give this a miss, unless you really need more air time.

LOOK AT THE LOVELY .WATER. Time to take aim and blitz them. Oh, but you can't. You can only fly around, admiring the beauty of the world around you.

VERDICT

FLY! 2

TECH SPEC

■ Minimum 233MHz Pentium 2 · 32MB RAM 4MB 3D card
■ Recommended 600MHz Pentium 3 · 256MB RAM 32MB 3D Card

■ Graphics Software ✗ Direct3D ✓ Glide ✗ OpenGL ✗
■ Sound EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗

MULTIPLAYER ■ Maximum number of players: PC - 1 LAN - 0 Internet - 64
■ Number of players per CD: 1 ■ CDs supplied with game: 1 ■ Minimum modem speed: 56 kb/s

MULTIPLAYER RATING **5**

HOW IT COMPARES

■ **Flight Unlimited 3**
If you want a realistic and enjoyable flight sim, this is your best bet.

■ **Flight Simulator 2000**
A fine example of how a non-combat flight sim should be.

■ **Combat Flight Simulator 2**
Propeller planes for your flying pleasure with baddies to shoot down too.

■ **Fly! 2**
The poor scenery visuals and dodgy flight characteristics let down this hardcore sim.

PROS & CONS

+ The aircraft exteriors look absolutely incredible

+ The dashboards and interiors are meticulously recreated.

- The 3.5GB footprint for a full install is pretty hefty.

- A hard copy of the 330 page manual is not included

- The scenery is bland and blocky, even at highest detail settings.

- The rendering bogs down when you push up the detail levels.

OVERALL

A flight simulation with bland looking scenery rendering and strange bouncing aircraft.

5

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£29.99** ■ Publisher: **Pan Interactive** ■ Developer: **Gizmo Games** ■ www.gizmogames.com

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE
DOMINION WARS

WORDS james price

GAME GLANCE

Choosing to control either the Federation or Cardassian alliance, play your way through twenty levels of tactical engagements.

- 3 campaigns
- 20 missions
- 20+ craft classes
- 6 crafts at once
- 8 man multiplayer
- Purely for DS9 fans

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

266MHz Pentium 2
64MB RAM
18MB 3D card

Whether you have the minimum spec above or a ninja-killer PC, there's not much in the way of extra graphics options that will vastly improve the eye candy on offer

If Deep Space Nine is your bag, then this a must have.

ominion Wars proudly boasts that it eschews the real-time strategy staples of base building and resource management in favour of "pure strategy and glorious combat". And it's true it features none of the administrative duties common to the vast majority of its peers. The "pure" and "glorious" bits are open to vigorous debate after several hours of play, however.

Dominion Wars has 20 missions of increasing complexity. The successful completion of each leads to the reward of credits, which can be spent on better craft, crew and equipment. From humble beginnings, you aspire to control a maximum of six, top-of-the-range craft, packed with fancy gadgets. Naturally, having so few units under your control means that combat is rather more involved than the average real-time strategy. From diverting power from one ship component to another, to the use of cloaking devices, there's more to combat exchanges than simply designating a target. It's even possible to board and overrun enemy ships, bolstering your fleet with enemy technology. There's an attendant risk with many options you need the requisite crew (bought before each mission) to capture an enemy vessel, while de-cloaking (in order to fire, for example) can leave a craft without shields for a brief but vulnerable duration.

So far, so good. On paper, Dominion Wars is great. In practice, it's a mite tedious. Part of its problem is that it is so evidently, and firmly, aimed at Star Trek devotees. The options available to you as commander read like a

ONE FOR THE TREK MAFIA Fans of Sky One's backbone show, Deep Space Nine (does it broadcast any other programmes? Oh yes, Babylon 5 and Star Trek: The Next Generation) will thrive in the spacial environment.

wish list – Gizmo Games evidently did their homework. Sadly, unless a mission requires it, actually using them often feels like an arbitrary decision. Unless you embrace the whole fantasy of being in charge of the DS9 hardware, it's a bit... well, hollow. Missions can often slump past without any sense of interest or feeling of involvement.

Equally, the design of each ever often feels too definite. fulfil criteria X in this manner, go to position Y, defend craft Z. There's a circuitous route through each level more often than not, you're just joining up the dots between battles. This is something common to many

games, but it's glaringly, annoyingly apparent with Dominion Wars. Beating each level is a matter of ascertaining which way Gizmo's designers would like you to play it, then simply doing so.

THE FINAL WORD It's by no means dismal, but Dominion Wars is certainly less than inspired; rarely does it quicken the pulse or challenge the mind. Unless you have a serious penchant for all things Deep Space Nine, avoid. Oh, and there's a real bug problem, too: a patch has been made available, but that's not the point.

BLACK HOLE Some of the visuals are admittedly very nice and add something to the proceedings

VERDICT
STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE 9 – DOMINION WARS

TECH SPEC
- Minimum 266MHz Pentium 2 64MB RAM 8MB 3D Card
- Recommended 300MHz Pentium 2 64MB RAM 16MB 3D Card
- Graphics Software ✗ Direct3D ✓ 3Dfx ✗ OpenGL ✗
- Sound EAX (SBLive!) ✓ Aureal 3D ✓ Dolby Surround ✓

MULTIPLAYER ■ Maximum number of players PC 1 LAN 8 Internet 8
■ Number of players per CD 1 ■ CDs supplied with game ■ Minimum modem speed 33.3kbps

MULTIPLAYER RATING **6**

HOW IT COMPARES

■ **Homeworld**
Superficially similar, but very, very different and very, very superior.

■ **Star Trek: Armada**
Dominion Wars borrows a little from this one. Some of the cast did voices too.

■ **Dominion Wars**
Nice visuals and FX, but overall it lacks any real interest. One for the Trekkers

■ **Starfleet Command**
More of a simulation than RTS and again, one for the hardcore Trekkie

PROS & CONS

+ Noteworthy aesthetics – some of the effects are lovely.

+ A number of nice ideas, such as the various ship functions.

+ Solid soundtrack lends weight; the spot FX are... well, spot-on.

− Far from intuitive, and the manual's not up to scratch, too.

− Very buggy – the (admittedly small) patch is a requisite.

− Quite frankly, it's pretty tedious unless you're a big DS9 fan

OVERALL
One for hardcore DS9 fans only. Some nice ideas, but it doesn't grab the attention.

5

SHEEP, DOG N' WOLF

WORDS **mark robins**

GAME GLANCE

A cartoon puzzle game based on some of Warner Bros favourite characters. Catch the sheep while avoiding Sam Sheepdog.

■ 17 levels
■ 30 ACME objects
■ 3D cartoon graphics
■ 100s of hidden secrets
■ Get help from Daffy Duck

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

300MHz Pentium
64MB RAM
8MB 3D card

Sheep, Dog N' Wolf's cell-shading graphical trickery may cause slower machines to whimper a bit, but you can alter the screen resolution if things start to plod.

A joyous Loony Tunes caper, or another ACME disaster?

Cartoons today may be filled with muscle-bound heroes putting the world to rights, or ever more distasteful caricatures that delight in messing about with their bodily fluids, but many years ago we had Looney Tunes. Gentle, five-minute shorts filled with charming characters such as Bugs Bunny and Porky Pig; even today they still hold a special place in our hearts.

Hence it's almost impossible not to fall in love with Infogrames' latest puzzle game – a 3D recreation of the Looney Tunes world starring the infamous Ralph Wolf (a.k.a. Wile E Coyote). Never before has a game come this close to really capturing the 'feel' of the classic cartoons – forget Toonstruck, playing Sheep, Dog N' Wolf is the closest you'll get to being inside an old Warner Bros. cartoon.

Sheep, Dog N' Wolf – actually based on the 1953 short Don't Give Up The Sheep – puts you in the role of Ralph as he tries to steal sheep from a flock under the watchful eye of the laconic Sam Sheepdog – although this time it's all part of a bizarre game show hosted by Daffy Duck (who also acts as Ralph's mentor; showing him the ropes and guiding him through the tutorial level). In fact, all that Ralph needs to do to complete each level is get himself and just one sheep to the exit point without getting spotted by Sam. Simple? Unfortunately not.

HAVE YOU SEEN MY BUSH? One of Ralph's more amusing talents is the ability to jump into handily placed bushes and use them to creep up on the unsuspecting sheep. A classic cartoon trick that never fails to amuse.

The game is best described as a development of the Lemmings style of play. Not only do you have to work out how to approach the flock, you must also figure out how to snatch a sheep and get it past the obstacles to the exit point. To help, there is a map that can be accessed, and like Lemmings, it's best to plan your approach first.

Each level is littered with obstacles – canyons, rope-bridges, rivers, locked gates and massive boulders, for example – and figuring out how to get past them is where the puzzle-solving elements come into play. Sometimes the answer is part of the environment – you may need to jump onto a seesaw with a rock on one end to catapult yourself up on to a higher ledge for example, or you may need to weigh down a button that opens a gate – in other cases you'll need to use one of the game's various ACME-branded objects.

HAZARDS OF THE JOB Scattered around each level are a number of blue mailboxes that once activated release a special object. Each mailbox always releases the same object and each object has some specific use in that level. Dynamite for instance can blow through rock falls while a fan can be used as a makeshift propeller for a raft. To make matters even harder, it often involves solving a separate puzzle just to get to the actual objects themselves.

Once you get to the flock, you must carefully avoid Sam's gaze (a head icon appears on screen to indicate which direction Sam is facing), often using rocks and shrubbery to your advantage, before snatching a sheep, or enticing it towards you, and making your exit. Of course, getting the sheep to the exit throws up yet more problems for poor old Ralph.

What's nice is the way the game encourages you to experiment by using different objects in different ways. Although

WHERE'D THE FLOOR GO? Just like the original cartoons, if Ralph runs off the edge of the cliff there's a short animation of him hanging suspended in mid-air, his feet scrabbling at nothing, before he finally plummets to the ground beneath. It raises a chuckle every time
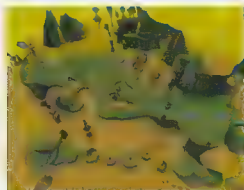
LAY OF THE LAND Each level begins with a flyby, showing both the flock and the exit point
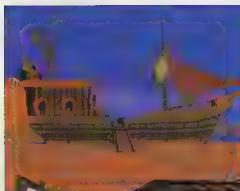
SHIP AHOY Later levels move to other locations like this Latin-looking shipyard. Arriba!

BLOWN AWAY Ralph has to dodge the eagle eye of Sam Sheepdog and catch just one sheep to complete each level. Sounds easy, but it's not. Sometimes it takes explosive action to solve the puzzles and overcome the obstacles in the way

most levels have a set solution, you can often approach them in diverse ways. And best of all, you are never penalised too much for dying or getting caught by Sam – you're

progress, but in one afternoon sitting we were already a third of the way through. Which may be enough for the average child gamer, but the majority of PC GAMEPLAY readers really

> ## THE LEVELS DO GET MUCH BIGGER AS YOU PROGRESS, BUT IN ONE AFTERNOON SITTING WE WERE ALREADY A THIRD OF THE WAY THROUGH

simply replaced a short distance away to carry on trying. Having to go back to the beginning each time would have been murderous, especially since some of the puzzles will have you tearing your hair out

CAMERA WOES Unfortunately, Sheep, Dog N' Wolf is plagued by two major problems that cost this game an extra mark and the GAMEPLAY Gold. Firstly, there's that annoying bugbear – the pernickety camera: sometimes it suits the action perfectly, sometimes it just stubbornly sits in the most awkward position and refuses to move, which is often too frustrating for words. Secondly there's a shortage of levels – only 16 plus the tutorial. Yes, the levels do get much bigger as you

deserve a bit more. So Infogrames, learn these lessons and sort these admittedly minor problems out for the inevitable sequel and we'll bow at your feet

THE FINAL WORD It might look like a kids game, but Sheep, Dog N' Wolf is one of the most entertaining puzzle games we've seen in ages. So don't let the Looney Tunes theme put you off, as this is well-designed, packed with puzzles and humour reminiscent of the original cartoons and inimitably playable. Sheep, Dog N' Wolf cannot fail to bring a smile to your cynical adult face.
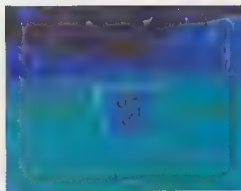
ICE E COYOTE Now all we need is a nice gin and tonic for our Coyote flavoured ice block

WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING Can this disguise really fool ol' Sam Sheepdog? No? Thought not
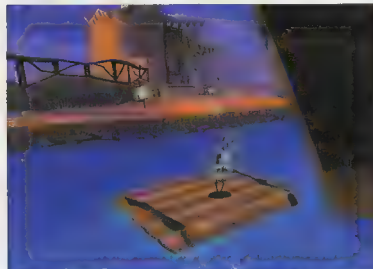
CRAFTY CAPERS Here you can see Ralph, getting about on a fan-powered raft. But like other objects in the game, there's more than one use for the electric fan.

VERDICT
SHEEP, DOG & WOLF

HOW IT COMPARES

■ **Lemmings Revolution**
The final and best outing for the suicidal mammals. Now with added 'spin'.

■ **Sheep, Dog 'n' Wolf**
The Looney Tunes come to life in this excellent slice of puzzle outing.

■ **Sheep**
Another puzzle game starring Sheep, that's as frustrating as it is fun.

■ **Hogs of war**
Another 3D game featuring farmyard animals, better served as bacon though.

PROS & CONS

+ A perfect recreation of the Looney Tunes world in 3D.
+ Loads of increasingly satisfyingly solvable puzzles.
+ Secrets on each level unlock bonus materials.
+ Genuinely funny animations keep you entertained.
− A stubborn camera that refuses to play fair with you.
− Not enough levels for a lasting challenge.

OVERALL

Like the cartoons themselves, Sheep, Dog N' Wolf is a short, sweet, satisfying experience.

7

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£19.99** ■ Publisher: **Day Dream Software** ■ Developer: **Day Dream Software** ■ www.clusterball.com

CLUSTERBALL

WORDS jon brown

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

In 200 years' time, you'll be watching this on Grandstand.

According to filmmakers and videogame designers, there will come a time within the next two hundred years when the world's population will wake up to the discovery that football, cricket, golf, basketball, horse racing and boxing are no longer adequate as sporting pursuits. In place of these once loved pastimes, a sport resembling one of the disciplines from the hit TV series Gladiators will become globally accepted as the one and only source athletic of entertainment. We've seen it prophesised in Rollerball, Speedball, The Running Man and now Clusterball.

In this case, the activity replacing the combined weight of the beautiful game, the sweet science and the sport of kings is an unlikely mix of snooker, powerball (as seen on yep, the smash-hit TV show Gladiators) and WipeOut, the formidable PlayStation racing game. Here's how these three pieces fit together, piloting a hi-tech spacecraft

WHAT A LOAD OF BALLS! After collecting up the coloured balls from the various landing strips littered around the 11 venues, players must fly through this central ring to score points. Be warned, chains can be stolen.

AN UNLIKELY MIX OF SNOOKER, POWERBALL FROM THE TV SHOW GLADIATORS AND THE PSX CLASSIC, WIPEOUT

(WipeOut), players must gather up chains of red, yellow and blue balls (kind of like snooker) and deposit them in a central area to score points (hence powerball). Naturally there's a field of competitors out there trying to do likewise, so collecting the nine available power-ups is always advised. The power-ups range from the sneaky ball snatcher to the sneakier inverse controls, and should be used frequently and without discretion.

The main point of reference here is Rage Software's online trailblazer E-Racer, namely because Clusterball has been designed as a

multi player game first and foremost, with the single player option tagged on as a bonus. As with E-Racer, getting into net games is incredibly simple and there's a similar system for calculating your global ranking. But what if your internet connection goes down? Well, then you're in trouble, because the single player options are threadbare to say the least, even in comparison to E-Racer's rudimentary championship mode. The only option for Mr Jack Jones is a training mode against seven

computer-controlled opponents, who, it must be said, would struggle to overcome Gladiator Wolf in a game of Scissor, Paper, Stone. Mainly because they wouldn't get the rules.

THE FINAL WORD As a multiplayer game, Clusterball can provide moments of genuine excitement and if you can find a competitive server with seven other good players, the game really comes into its own. Alas, due to the shaky controls and creaking visuals, Clusterball is way down pecking order in terms of the list of top online titles. There's fun to be had without question, just plenty more of it elsewhere.

THE WAITING GAME PC GAMEPLAY tip: collect a ball snatcher, then lie in wait near the goal area and ambush your opponents as they return with their chain.

VERDICT
CLUSTERBALL

HOW IT COMPARES

■ **Quake 3: Arena**
You're looking for top notch on line multi-player right? Buy Quake 3 now

■ **E-Racer**
In terms of ambition and on one play, E-Racer is simply a better game all round.

■ **Clusterball**
A commendable effort but Clusterball isn't quite good enough

■ **MoHo**
Weak stab at future sports game. Don't buy it. Don't play it. Don't think about it.

PROS & CONS

✚ Online play is easy to get into and sure to provide a few hours play.

✚ A fairly entertaining game. Power-ups always welcome round here.

✚ Website calculates your global ranking. Encourages perseverance.

— Controls fail to convey any kind of feeling for space flight.

— Single player options are anaemic. Won't last more than an hour.

— Visually, less a glimpse of the future than a blast from the past.

OVERALL

Like the future, it promises an awful lot then doesn't turn out quite as you expected.

6

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£19.99** ■ Publisher: **Microids** ■ Developer: **Microids** ■ www.microids.com
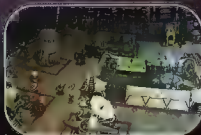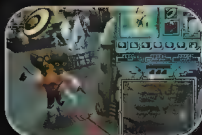
OPEN KART

WORDS j o n   e v a n s

GAME GLANCE

Complete a gruelling (not to mention boring) 20 track season and endeavour to become the World Karting Champion. If the fancy takes you, tinker with the tyre pressure weight distribution and braking power for those extra few miles per hour

■ 100, 125 and 250cc karts
■ 20 tracks
■ 4 weather conditions
■ 7 opponents to race
■ No chance of enjoying the game

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

350MHz Pentium 2 64MB RAM 12MB 3D Card

For a game that can only support eight small karts on screen at once, the minimum spec is surprisingly high. If you want to squeeze a bit more juice out of the game, the resolution can be lowered to 640x480 and lighting effects such as the lens flare and reflections, can be turned off. Alternatively, reduce the number of karts to four and you should not ice a difference in performance.

And you thought go-karting was fun!

When you install a game that eats up over 600MB of your hard drive it's easy to assume that you're in for something pretty damn special. But thinking this while waiting for Open Kart to plant itself on your machine is a big mistake. Correction, putting this game on your machine at *all* is a big mistake. Microids has somehow managed to turn the fast, adrenaline-pumped sport into a dull, lifeless and frustratingly short-lived racer.

Go-karting is great fun. Open Kart isn't. And that's putting it politely. It takes no longer than the length of the first lap to realise this disappointing point. But the problem's not content. There's an ample supply of tracks and different karts to race and the career mode, which challenges you to become World Karting Champion, enables you to tinker with your vehicle, buying and selling parts to help you take the coveted crown.

No, the problem's not content. It's the meat

GRANDSTAND FINISH Another major problem is the 20 tracks, which are quite frankly pathetic

STATE OF THE KART Is this really why you forked out a thousand pounds for your PC? Of course not.

TRACK RECORD The career mode might offer some semblance of fun. Actually, we're lying. It won't.

KART OF STONE One of our major beefs with Open Kart is the handling of the go-karts, which may be intuitive but is equally frustrating and unrealistic. In an age of Gran Turismo 3, do we really have to put up with this?

and two veg of the game: the racing. Once you hit the tarmac, the game falls apart. The tracks are demanding but unimaginative, the graphics are bland and lifeless and the vehicles – there's a choice of 100, 125 and 250cc karts – all feel pedestrian. To make

drivers and – dare we suggest it – even a few apes and princesses would have benefited the game enormously.

THE FINAL WORD The frustrating controls and poorly designed tracks soon dissipate

THE FRUSTRATING CONTROLS AND POORLY DESIGNED TRACKS SOON DISSIPATE ANY INITIAL ENTHUSIASM

matters worse, the game only supports a maximum of eight racers, and although the tracks are short, this nevertheless still deprives you of the kind of bumper-to-bumper action that makes real go-karting so much fun. The whole thing lacks pace and excitement. A few short oval tracks to condense the action, more

any initial enthusiasm. The game invites you in with an intuitive interface and basic controls – how hard can it be to drive a go-kart? – but then forces you back out by not offering a compelling challenge, any decent tracks or karts that handle realistically. Heed this advice: Leave well alone.

VERDICT
DRAGONRIDERS

TECH SPEC
■ Minimum 350MHz Pentium 2 64MB RAM 12MB 3D card
■ Recommended 400MHz Pentium 3 64MB RAM 16MB 3D card

■ Graphics	Software ✗ Direct3D ✓ Glide ✗ OpenGL ✗
■ Sound	EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✓ Dolby Surround ✗

MULTIPLAYER ■ Maximum number of players PC 1 LAN 8 internet 0
■ Number of players per CD 1 ■ CDs supplied with game 1 ■ Minimum modem speed n/a

MULTIPLAYER RATING **4**

HOW IT COMPARES

■ **Colin McRae 2**
A classic racer that can already be found in bargain bins around the country

■ **Grand Prix 3**
If you want a hardcore simulation, make this your first choice

■ **Super 1 Karting**
By no means brilliant, but M das better go kart racer's available on the cheap.

■ **Open Kart**
A poor excuse for a racing game. You can get better much better on budget

PROS & CONS

➕ 20 tracks and the career mode provide distraction for a while.

➕ At £20 you won't waste too much money if you buy it by mistake.

➖ The karts feel pedestrian and the handling is very dodgy.

➖ The graphics are way below the standard expected today.

➖ The tracks are all drive similarly and lack imagination and craft.

➖ What more do you want? Move on to the next review.

OVERALL

Race the lawnmower around your garden instead and you'll have more fun.

3

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£29.95** ■ Publisher: **THQ** ■ Developer: **Heavy Iron** ■ www.evildeadgame.com

EVIL DEAD HAIL TO THE KING

WORDS craig vaughan

GAME GLANCE

Strap on your chainsaw and ready your shotgun as Ash takes on the evil dead in this survival horror tribute to Sam Raimi's cult favourite B-movie trilogy

■ 1 Bruce Campbell
■ 100s of odd zombies
■ 20 different enemies
■ several familiar Evil Dead locations

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

**233MHz Pentium
32MB RAM
4MB 3D card**

The high minimum spec is a mystery all of its own because the visuals certainly don't warrant such heavy processor requirements. Nonetheless, you'll need a P300 and 64MB of RAM before the slaughter can properly begin

The horror classic arrives to backstab loyal Sam Raimi fans.

When a publisher neglects to send review code to the PC GAMEPLAY offices, suspicions are roused. When the helpful chap in our local Game store is kind enough to point out numerous survival horror alternatives, fear sets in. When punters are seen taking advantage of a 'no quibble' returns policy, the truth becomes as plain as the game in the box. So let's be clear about this – seldom in the long and sordid history of film licence tie-ins has such a classic work as the Evil Dead been so viciously abused in the name of entertainment

Clearly a Resident Evil wannabe, the game shares its third-person perspective, pre-rendered backdrops, cinematic camera angles and lust for bloodshed and gratuitous violence. Unfortunately, though, Evil Dead has clearly been coded to the lowest common denominator, which in this case is the putrid PlayStation version. Thus, our hero, Ash – who

EVIL, AND DEAD DULL This screen almost makes it look interesting. But believe us, when you see this beast in motion, coupled with the gameplay, you'll be wishing that you could join the zombies in the afterlife.

SELDOM HAS SUCH A CLASSIC AS THE EVIL DEAD BEEN SO VICIOUSLY ABUSED IN THE NAME OF ENTERTAINMENT

has foolishly ventured back into the woods to face the evil dead once more – looks dreadful and moves like a cardboard cut-out

As he plods through poorly depicted exterior locations (some of which fans will recognise from Raimi's film), he is constantly harassed by re-spawning enemies that show little intelligence, but still manage to hamper progress by sheer weight of numbers. As if navigating murky outdoor scenery wasn't problematical enough, someone has seen fit to implement the type of artistic and cheesy

camera work that frustrates by disorientating at every turn. All of which would be forgivable if the game possessed the tension of the latest Resident Evil series, the visuals of the latest Alone In the Dark outing, or the moody atmosphere of the Blair Witch trilogy – but by now you'll have realised that it doesn't. In fact, what little gameplay there is boils down to collecting health and ammo whilst scavenging fuel for your bloodthirsty chainsaw and performing tasks like opening doors, digging holes and combining objects in order to

progress. The inventory system is far from intuitive and is further hampered by the lack of joystick control, with the only sanity saving blessing being the short lifespan of a farce that ends with impeccable haste as if by way of apology for its horrific disposition.

THE FINAL WORD The history of computer games is littered with similar film tie-in woes, so perhaps the devastation of such a cherished classic shouldn't surprise. Clearly betrayed by its console origins, this outing has little to offer even die-hard Raimi fans. The irony is that it's both shocking and horrific, but for all the wrong reasons.

TAKING STOCK The inventory system allows access to collected items and weapons, but it's fiddly and irritating to navigate without a joystick to help.

VERDICT
EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING

TECH SPEC
■ **Minimum** 233MHz Pentium 2 32MB RAM 4MB 3D Card
■ **Recommended** 400MHz Pentium 3 64MB RAM 16MB 3D Card
■ **Graphics** Software ✘ Direct3D ✔ 3Dfx ✘ OpenGL ✘
■ **Sound** EAX (SBLive!) ✘ Aureal 3D ✘ Dolby Surround ✘

MULTIPLAYER ■ Max number of players PC · 1 LAN · 0 Internet 64
■ Number of players per CD 1 ■ CDs supplied with game 2 ■ Minimum modem speed n/a

MULTIPLAYER RATING n/a

HOW IT COMPARES

■ **Resident Evil Series**
Capcom showed the world how survival horror should be properly done

■ **Alone In The Dark 4**
Visually stunning with gameplay that is both gripping and intense

■ **The Blair Witch Trilogy**
Now available on a budget box set, this never engrosses as much as its rivals

■ **Evil Dead: Hail To The King**
Shocking visuals and repetitive gameplay ruin this abysmal cult film tie-in

PROS & CONS

+ It's based on the movies, and some of the locations are faithful.

+ There's plenty of slaughtering to enjoy and the blood flows freely

− The enemies re-spawn too quickly and annoy rather than challenge.

− The pre-rendered backdrops are poor and the animation stiff.

− The pace is slow, the plot is dull and the puzzles are an afterthought.

− It's another rushed, cynical cash-in of a beloved film classic.

OVERALL

You'd have to be as brain dead as Raimi's zombies to consider this a worthy purchase.

3

■ Out: **October** ■ Price: **£34.99** ■ Publisher: **Virgin Interactive** ■ Developer: **GCS** ■ www.venom3d.com

CODENAME: OUTBREAK

WORDS jon brown

GAME GLANCE

A tactical shooter playable either in the first or the third person that gives you two soldiers and a range of fancy weapons with which to neutralise another pesky alien invasion. Strangely enjoyable 'if completely unoriginal.

- 14 missions
- 5 rifles
- 9 modes of fire
- 4 lens! Again
- 43 scenarios
- 9 trains
- 6 routes
- 3 game modes
- Is this gaming?
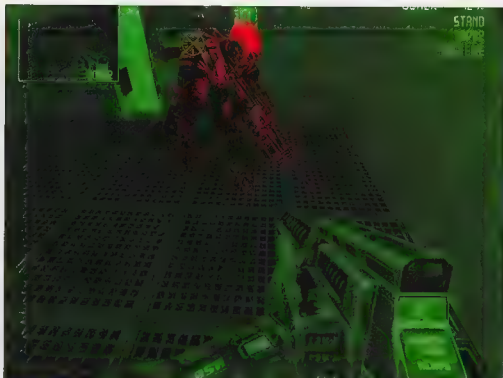
NIGHT NIGHT The night vision mode gives you another crucial edge over your opponents. By activating the Tessla Generator, you can turn your soldiers semi-invisible, helping you to slip by unnoticed.

BIG BROTHER The screen in the left-hand corner gives you a view of what your other soldiers are doing.

TANKS A BUNCH Unfortunately, you won't be controlling one of these metal bad boys in Outbreak

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

**266MHz Pentium 2
128MB RAM
8MB 3D card**

The remarkable thing here is the amount of RAM that Outbreak requires to get it running. Bes des that, any machine near this spec should have no problems with the game at its lowest resolution of 640x480.

The colon is a vital part of the body. Without this section of the large intestine day-to-day life would be impossible, not to mention an extremely unpleasant, and you would eventually die an extremely painful death, poisoned by your own bodily waste. But colons also serve another very important purpose, namely in helping publishers to shift PC games. A quick glimpse at last month's charts will reveal that no less than nine of the top 20 games featured a colon somewhere in the title. And it's for this very reason that you find yourself reading a review of Codename

Outbreak and not Venom, which was the title of this game before Virgin Interactive realised that PC gamers are stimulated into making purchasing decisions by two small dots, one placed directly above the other.

If Codename: Outbreak were a film, you'd put it back on the shelf before you'd finished reading the blurb on the back, for the story seems to have been written by DI Rivative and his partner Cheese McCliché. Here it is: A recent meteor shower has resulted in a proliferation of alien spores on planet Earth, some of which have infected humanoids who are slowly being mutated into otherworldly

BREAKER BREAKER The zoom also magnifies radio waves, allowing you to listen in on the guards.

> **A COMBINATION OF SOLID AI, GREAT MISSIONS AND TIGHT TEAM PLAY CARVE OUTBREAK A SPACE ON YOUR SHELF**

SOFTLY, SOFTLY It's best to snipe the enemy from range, avoiding the bigger, louder weapons. The third-person view, pictured above, is not without its uses

forms. It goes without saying, but in the absence of Jean Claude Van Damme, you're the only bastard tough enough to neutralise this potentially global threat.

Missions are not conducted solo but in teams of two, with the player able to switch between the soldiers at any time during the play. Operatives not being directly controlled can be issued with one of four simple orders – cover me, fire at will, hold position and hold fire – and a small window can be pulled up to show the view of your dormant soldier, should you wish to keep an eye on him. The artificial intelligence of your partners is impressive, and when you plunge headlong into a battle, shouting "engage" in your manliest voice, you can always rely on your buddy to attack the most potent threat first. Before you embark on any of this however, it's up to you

to select two soldiers from a large roster of troops, all of whom have differing levels of speed, accuracy, stamina and strength. A character's strength determines the size of his inventory, and as many of the missions require a careful management of your items, it's always advisable to strike a balance between a physically strong soldier and a more specialised operative, one with good stealth or speed for example.

On the face of it, the missions themselves are nothing to write home about, consisting of an atypical mix of reconnaissance, rescue, ambush and infiltrate. But the genius here is in how these tasks are structured. Your list of objectives is constantly being revised and updated by your superiors, and a mission that starts off with you searching a land base for shreds of information on the alien scum can easily wind up with your team aboard a battleship peppering a fleeing helicopter with rockets and machinegun fire. You're never quite sure what's going to be thrown at you next and this adds a real sense of adventure

SURPRISE, SURPRISE The ambush is blown when we get rather over-excited at the sight of an enemy tank and decide over our better judgement to pump all of our of available rockets into it. Outbreak doesn't look all that great, but it's such a well-balanced game that you'll be having too much fun to notice. The teams of two work brilliantly, as you've always got a firm handle on things.

And now, the moment all you subscribers to Gun and Ammo Monthly have been waiting for: the weapons. First the bad news – you only get to take one weapon out with you on each mission. Rubbish right? Actually no, because each gun has a wide number of different modes and configurations, making it very much the Swiss Army man's fictional futuristic weapon of choice. The M40 rifle, for instance, can be programmed to fire armour-piercing projectiles, flares, flash-bangs, grenades, mines or rockets, or can be converted into a sniper rifle or submachine gun. Your rifle also has a rather spiffing zoom function that not only allows you to see up the noses of your opponents but also magnifies their radio waves and enables you to eavesdrop on guards or detect their presence when they're not physically visible. And for those times when you simply have to get up close and personal, your suit features a rather handy semi-invisibility mode. Neat huh?

And it's a bloody good job that you are well equipped, for these guards are no fools. The level of artificial intelligence is impressive throughout, and this encourages you to fully survey an area before you take any action, rather than running in all guns blazing. Should you manage to take down an enemy from long range with your sniper rifle,

other guards in the vicinity can be heard to exclaim "Where are they shooting from?" and "I see no one!" all the while frantically scanning the horizon searching for your silhouette. When discovered, guards co-ordinate their attacks against you and think nothing of attempting to flush you out. The impact that this has on deepening the atmosphere and overall tension cannot be underestimated.

THE FINAL WORD For a game that doesn't have a shred of originality, it comes as a surprise to report that Outbreak is a quality game, one worthy of your consideration if you've enjoyed Tribes 2, Operation Flashpoint or any of Tom Clancy's vanity projects. And it's a combination of solid AI, nicely designed missions and tight team play that ultimately carve Outbreak its own special space on your software shelf.

VERDICT
CODENAME: OUTBREAK

TECH SPEC
- **Minimum** 266MHz Pentium 2, 128MB RAM 8MB 3D card
- **Recommended** 500MHz Pentium 3, 128MB RAM 32MB 3D card
- **Graphics** Software ✗ Direct3D ✓ Glide ✗ OpenGL ✗
- **Sound** EAX (SBLive!) ✓ Aureal 3D ✓ Dolby Surround ✗

MULTIPLAYER ■ Maximum number of players PC – LAN – 16 Internet – 16
■ Number of players per CD 1 ■ CDs supplied with game 1 ■ Minimum modem speed 28.8 kbps

MULTIPLAYER RATING **8**

HOW IT COMPARES

■ **Operation Flashpoint:**
The daddy of tactical shooters. The only problem is that we can't stop playing it.

■ **Tribes 2:**
With vehicles and a higher level of character control character 12 has the edge.

■ **Codename: Outbreak:**
A very fine action strategy game that you can slip into and lose yourself in.

■ **Rogue Spear**
A classic that's starting to look dated now. One for SAS wannabes.

PROS & CONS

+ Controlling two operatives is simple and allows for deep strategy.
+ Artificial Intelligence, both of your team and the enemy, is impressive.
+ Always rewards careful thinking and heavy preparation.
+ Missions are well structured. Often more than one way through.
− Story is lame and the presentation is a touch rough.
− 14 missions might not be enough for some hardcore gamers.

OVERALL

It might have changed its name, but there's still plenty of venom in this shooter.

8

■ Out: **October** ■ Price: **£24.99** ■ Publisher: **Monte Cristo** ■ Developer: **in-house** ■ www.crazyfactory.com

CRAZY FACTORY

WORDS **james price**

GAME GLANCE

Choose one of three product lines (canines, domestic androids, roller blades) and attempt to dominate the marketplace by fair means or foul. Hire and fire staff, 'n'bate research, upgrade your premises... and more! But not much more. In fact, less than you'd expect.

■ 3 play modes
■ 3 product lines
■ 30 components
■ 8 players
■ Considerable soporific qualities

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

200MHz Pentium
64MB RAM

Requires the memory of approximately 32 PlayStat ons to run. Why? We've launched spaceships - left the planet! - with computers far less sophist cated than the minimum spec Crazy Factory demands. Now rearrange the following words to make a sentence: "Ineff c ent, programming lazy."

BASIC: 10 Print "Don't buy this! Run away!" 20: Go to 10.

Crazy Factory will not give you cancer. Its CD will not, during the install process, burst from your drive in an indiscriminate 60 degree killing arc, disembowelling family and cake-bearing wel -wishers alike. A massive rectal pro apse during a prolonged playing session is unlikely; indeed, sustained play is improbable, period. But enough of such virtues.

Crazy Factory masquerades as a management sim of the Theme Park genus, but don't be fooled by ts colourful façade. With, for example, Chris Sawyer's Rollercoaster Tycoon, the almost tactile p easure of crafting your own rides, physically arranging your own park and observing it work is the primary attraction. By contrast, Crazy Factory focuses exclusively on financial management and administrative busywork. You buy machinery, appoint staff, or upgrade buildings, wh ch then appear at preordained positions.

You begin each game, of course, with a tight budget. For each 'hot spot' on your factory map, there are different levels of personnel and equipment you can acquire. The catch – brace those neurons, folks! – is that opting for the more efficient but expensive options from the outset will soon see your company bankrupt. Ergo, you scrimp wherever you can, until the
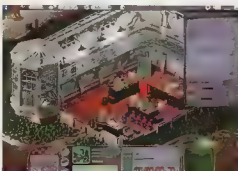
IF YOU'RE MAD When you get back from the office, why not spend some time on an office-simulator?
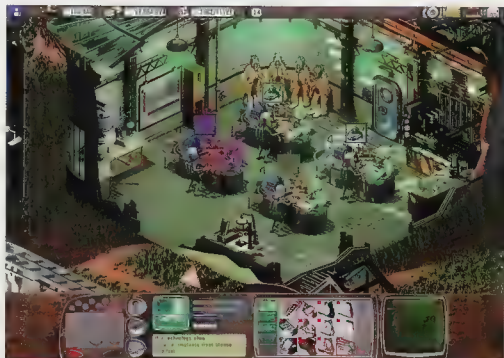
PURE ACTION Your factory is a thriving hotbed of company politics, office affairs and women photocopying their private parts. Or just dull gameplay, pointless tasks, and some of the most boring graphics seen in ages.

CRAZY FACTORY MASQUERADES AS A MANAGEMENT SIM OF THE THEME PARK GENUS, BUT DON'T BE FOOLED

cash begins to roll in. You know how chess 's, at once accessibly simple yet challengingly complex, and how engrossing it can be? Well, establishing your premises is just like setting the board up prior to a game, sans the charm.

Achieving market dominance against artificial intelligence or – snigger – connected human opponents is a s mple matter of adjusting a small collection of variables. Generally, you ensure your company's margin on each sale is reasonable, that you spend sensibly on marketing, and that you upgrade elements of your factory when possible. It's at this point that Crazy Factory's lack of depth becomes all too apparent. Within an hour,

you'll have seen al t has to offer. Twice. Worse still, its unwieldy design denies it a possible (but unlikely) niche as a desktop toy – it en oins near constant attention with irritating tasks. Still, at east the 'return to Windows' option is quick and painless.

THE FINAL WORD Crazy Factory is a risible, ill-conceived exercise in tedium. Its final score reflects its stability, reasonable presentation, and the fact that we could all do with a bit more fresh air and exercise, right? Fools can enjoy both on their way back to the software store, receipt in hand.

SHAMEFUL If you last longer than an hour without getting bored, you must be the programmer's mum.

VERDICT
CRAZY FACTORY

TECH SPEC
■ Minimum   200MHz Pentium   64MB RAM
■ Recommended 233MHz Pentium   64MB RAM
■ Graphics Software ✓ Direct3D ✗ Glide ✗ Opens ✗
■ Sound EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗

MULTIPLAYER ■ Maximum number of players PC - LAN 8 Internet 8
■ Number of players per CD 8   ■ CDs supplied with game 1   ■ Minimum modem speed 28.8kb/s

MULTIPLAYER RATING 2

HOW IT COMPARES

■ **The Sims**
Few games have captured the hearts of global gamers more than this series.

■ **Rollercoaster Tycoon**
Chris Sawyer's op..s is that rare beast, a 'ma nstream' PC hit. And rightly so.

■ **Theme Park**
Antiquated by modern standards, but still more sophist cated than Crazy Factory

■ **Crazy Factory**
Dull, painfully dated management sim with no redeeming features at all

PROS & CONS

+ Each box guaranteed free of the lethal Ebola virus!

− Demonstrates no appreciation of professional games design.

− Packed with banal jobs, confusing 'tedious tasks' with 'content'.

− You'll see everything it really has to offer within an hour or so, tops.

− Those bloody modem sound effects in the background.

− Ack! Ebola... melting my... heh! Only xidding

OVERALL

Badly designed and shallow, and obviously aimed at the less discerning gamer.

2

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£24.95** ■ Publisher: **Eidos interactive** ■ Developer: **Hot House Creations** ■ www.eidosinteractive.co.uk

WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE? JUNIOR

WORDS **craig vaughan**

GAME GLANCE

Rejoin Chris Tarrant as he invites the nation's youth to jump into the hot seat and climb the stairway to heaven, answering general knowledge questions in pursuit of the virtual million

■ £1 million not at stake
■ 1 smug Chris Tarrant
■ 1000 easy questions
■ 3 familiar lifelines
■ 1 doggy cash-in
■ only easy if you know them

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

166MHz Pentium 32MB RAM

There's nothing going on here that will stretch the lowest spec PC, so even a relative underpowered P166 and 32MB of RAM will give you a shot at snatching the big prize.

Tarrant returns in the junior version of the smash hit quiz.

It would have been negligent of Eidos to let the school summer holidays slip by without profiting from the enduring nature of the most successful general knowledge quiz show of all time. And so we return to the familiar, but very clever format of a game that continues to amuse and entertain in equal measure

Although the TV show is essentially nothing more than a pub quiz, its success is ensured by several key factors. The first is the banter of amiable host Chris Tarrant, who is as likely to lead contestants away from the correct answer as guide them towards it. Secondly, punters can view the question and four answers before deciding whether to press on or quit. And finally, the huge cash prizes and availability of 'second chances' add tension and greed to the exquisitely balanced mix. Thankfully this junior edition of the worldwide success remains faithful to both its television parent and the adult version

IT'S POSH Any media literate kid will know this Give them a question on the Magna Carta instead...
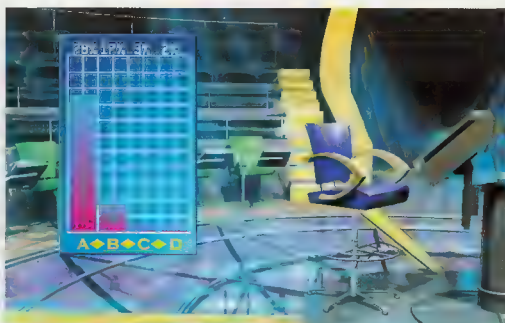
NO ONE CARES 78 per cent of the empty audience believe that A is the answer. And although maths isn't our hottest topic, we calculate that to be nobody. So it doesn't really matter what you choose at all.

It's identical in every respect, such as the ability to phone a virtual friend, remove two wrong answers or seek the advice of a virtual studio audience. None of these options prove decisive when the correct answer eludes you, but they do add to the excitement

The new questions are targeted at a teen and pre-teen audience so oldies would do well to steer clear lest they embarrass themselves by revealing their lack of knowledge in all matters TV and pop. And with parents sidelined, it is left to the kids to compete as a team, go head-to-head or battle it out to see who has the fastest wit and deepest breadth of knowledge

Although there are only 1000 questions, they're grouped according to their cash prize value, which should ensure that repetition isn't a problem. It looks certain that the summer months will see the massed ranks of the nation's youth vegetating around PC monitors, expanding their knowledge and waistlines alike

THE FINAL WORD Eidos doesn't have to pretend that this is edutainment – the phenomenal success of the show and the nature of the game are reason enough for kids to brow-beat parents into sending this straight to the top of the software charts.

TEASING PRIZES The tantalising numbers merely hint at the riches that could be yours... if you phone Chris Tarrant on 0345... The rest of us will have to just dream.

VERDICT

WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE JUNIOR

TECH SPEC

■ **Minimum**	166MHz Pentium 32MB RAM
■ **Recommended**	266MHz Pentium 2 32MB RAM 4MB graphics card
■ **Graphics** Software ✓ Direct3D ✗ Glide ✗ OpenGL ✗	
■ **Sound** EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗	

MULTIPLAYER ■ Maximum number of players: PC 4 LAN 0 Internet 0
■ Number of players per CD 1 ■ CDs supplied with game 1 ■ Minimum modem speed N/A

MULTIPLAYER RATING 6

HOW IT COMPARES

■ **WWTBAM**
The adult version of Chris Tarrant's hugely successful TV show.

■ **WWTBAM Junior**
A remix of the original, aimed at children. Pretty identical, apart from the questions

■ **Trivial Pursuit**
A spot-on convers on of the board game. The family that plays together

■ **Trivial Pursuit Millennium**
Remixed for 2000. It was knocked for six by the enormous success of Millionaire

PROS & CONS

+ It retains the atmosphere of the smash hit TV show.

+ As in the TV show, players are given three lifelines.

+ Chris Tarrant is at his smug, amiable and cheerful best

– There are 1000 questions, so they'll wear thin eventually.

– It could have been a cheaper expansion pack for the original.

– Cynics will frown on its pricing, timing and targeting.

OVERALL

Undoubtedly entertaining for kids, but nonetheless released at a slightly dubious price.

6

ARCANUM
OF STEAMWORKS & MAGICK OBSCURA

WORDS **mark robins**

GAME GLANCE

From the people who brought us Fallout comes an epic role-playing game filled with a heady mix of magic and technology. Expect massive locations, stacks of quests, plenty of treasure and hordes of monsters to battle.

- 280 monsters
- 80 spells
- 56 technological skills
- 2 paths to follow
- look, it's going to take you ages, OK?

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

300MHz Pentium 2
64MB RAM

Arcanum's graphics are such that they shouldn't bother this setting too much. However you may find things slow down a bit when there's lots going on.

Delve into a Jules Verne-esque world of steam and sorcery.

Imagine a Jules Verne style world of Victorian glamour and emerging technologies and then combine it with a typical fantasy setting of magic, elves and trolls and you'll have some idea of what Arcanum is all about. For in this curious world there is not just one underlying force that permeates every aspect of life, but two: magic and technology – both are powerful, but neither are dominant. As someone once said, "One man's meat is another man's poison."

The game begins with a pleasure cruise onboard the airship IFS Zephyr. Things go wrong during the flight however, and the airship soon comes under attack from a pair of fighter planes, causing the airship to crash to the ground in a fiery blaze. As luck would have it, you survive the crash and it's while searching the wreckage that you discover a badly injured gnome who hands you a ring and mutters something about a 'coming darkness' before passing away. Together with a passing religious nut, who seems to think you are the reincarnation of the holy elf Panarii, the pair of you set off across Arcanum, searching

THAT'S MAGIC! Because Arcanum gives you complete freedom to develop as you see fit, you can specialise in magic and completely ignore the technology aspects if you want. This gives a much more D&D feel to the game.

for the owner of the ring and unravelling the secrets of the ominous sounding darkness. Anybody who's played Fallout 1 & 2 will immediately feel at home with Arcanum (many of the members of Troika Games worked on the original Fallout games) but the now standard isometric viewpoint should mean that all but the most virginal of role-playing gamers will have no problems getting to grips with it. The main game screen displays all the action, the locations you

FROM THE MOMENT YOU BEGIN PLAYING, YOU MUST DECIDE WHICH PATH TO FOLLOW: MAGIC OR TECHNOLOGY?

IT CAME FROM THE DESERT One of Arcanum's best points is its massive range of monsters to take on. It's a pity that most of them look a bit weedy.

DREARY The clichéd gothic architecture and drab colours just make the whole experience even duller.

traverse, the people you can interact with and the monsters you must slay while inventory, journal and map screens are but a mere click away. For a game with such an intriguing setting, its mechanics seem anything but

STAT-TASTIC As you travel from town to town, following the trail of the ring and carrying out the various tasks and side quests that appear, your character begins to develop and it's here that Arcanum's much trumpeted skill-based system rears its head. From the very moment you begin creating your character – in itself a comprehensive task that allows you to alter minute details such as how your childhood background affects your current standing – you must decide which path to follow: magic or technology?

Character points received as you progress can be spent on learning new spells or developing new technologies such as curative potions, firearms, explosives and mechanical traps. Specialise in one area however, and your talent for the other will decrease. It is possible to improve in both areas (the study of alchemy for example), but the incompatibility of magic and technology means you'll never be able to reach a particularly high level of skill in either

PARDON ME This bilious green fog is actually due to a suspect curry as opposed to any magical effects.
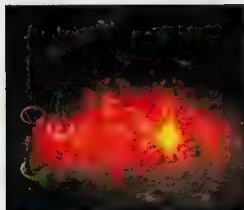
TOASTY The campfire songs were brought to a premature end when a stray spark hit the liquor supply.

A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING The inventory screen is where you store all the junk you accumulate. It also acts as the shop screen with objects on the left representing the shop's stock. Simply click and drag objects between the two items windows to buy and sell your goods.

The system is further complicated by a third set of skills that must be earnt from the various inhabitants of Arcanum. These include such talents as melee combat, trap detection, and gambling, all of which are essential for making your way around the game map.

It's a demanding system that requires you to carefully micro-manage your character's development and statistics, and while there's a great deal of entertainment to be had from this aspect, the developer has thoughtfully added a number of options to automatically upgrade your character in certain ways. For example, you could set the game to allocate character points in such a way as to produce an engineer that specialises in explosives

it's a pity then that so much time has been lavished on such an excellent system to the detriment of some of the game's other aspects. Like the general gameplay, combat hasn't varied too much from the familiar Fallout system, offering both real-time and turn based systems that can be switched between at any point during your quest. While not necessarily a problem, it does give the game a certain familiarity.

GRAPHIC ISSUES The main problem, however, is the look of the game — it's disappointing to say the least. Yes, yes — we know that graphics do not a great game make, but with games like Pool Of Radiance, Dungeon Siege and Neverwinter Nights just around the corner, there can be no real excuse for

Arcanum's lack of visual splendour. What's even more disappointing is that, while boasting a truely novel world to explore, Arcanum makes little effort in trying to present a discernible blending of magic and technology within the game's locations. We love a great game, but we like it to look pretty as well

THE FINAL WORD The RPG-massive is probably going to love Arcanum — it offers hours of questing entertainment, especially for the Fallout veterans — so why the average score? Apart from the excellent skill-based system and the great, if sorely underused premise, Arcanum seems too dated — more like the sort of game we would have seen two-years ago. A last hurrah for the isometric RPG perhaps, but we think it's time to move on.

> **WITH GAMES LIKE DUNGEON SIEGE COMING, THERE CAN BE NO EXCUSE FOR ARCANUM'S LACK OF VISUAL SPLENDOUR**

READ ALL ABOUT IT Certain useful objects such as letters and newspapers can be examined for important clues as to where to travel to next.

VERDICT
ARCANUM

HOW IT COMPARES

■ Baldur's Gate 2
Probably the best RPG game in the world. Ever! Now sadly at its end...

■ Diablo 2
If you fancy your RPGs with a dash more action, then this is for you.

■ Fallout 1 & 2
Now available in a bargain basement double a pack. Hours of adventuring fun.

■ Arcanum
Interesting setting, but sadly dated. Worth your time if you're interested.

PROS & CONS

+ A very comprehensive skill system adds tons of variety.

+ A massive quest that will keep you going through many a night.

+ Fans of the Fallout games won't be disappointed.

− The genuinely novel setting is sadly underused.

− RPG virgins could be scared off by the complexity of it all.

− Really should have been released two years ago.

OVERALL

Worth considering if RPGs are your bag, but seems a bit too familiar for this day and age.

6

STAR TREK: ORION PIRATES

WORDS craig vaughan

The Federation readies for war with Orion Pirates.

With the Star Trek phenomenon marching ever onward, few gamers will be surprised that Interplay has seen fit to give its Starfleet Command franchise another airing. What may confuse some, though, is that although the game c aims to be an expans on pack, it's actua ly a standalone product that requires neither of the prequels in order to run

The original outing came as something of a rare treat in late 1999 — a time when computer adaptations of the smash hit TV show were sullying the brand's reputation with unimaginative and formu aic games across a variety of genres. The subsequent sequel, Empires At War, retained the real-time space battles and turn-based tactics of the or ginal, but failed to de iver the much-touted multiplayer features that gamers craved for The passage of time, though, has allowed this re ease to address some of the issues that so upset fans of the first two episodes

GENERATION GAME Based in the pre-Next Generation Star Trek universe, the game sets its stal out from the off — it's about sh ps, weapons and space combat, not persona ities, bartering or diplomacy All eight factions — including the Klingons, Romulans and Federation — return from the prequels and remain intent on expanding their sphere of nfluence by fair means or foul Additionally, the Orion Syndicate are added to the mix, with eight cartels attempting to muscle in and become the dominant force. As a relatively unknown

LOSING THE PLOT The unnecessarily clunky interface will have you pulling your hair out — it all could have been so much easier . Persevere with it though, and there's a richly detailed game lying underneath

quantity, they e ther co-operate or compete with opposing factions as necessity dictates

Offering a comprehensive tutorial, the producers were aware that newcomers might be put off by the need to master the ship's functions As captain you have to monitor and tweak all power, navigation and weapons-rea ated systems — a mammoth task not helped by an obstructive interface that requires menu after menu of menial settings to be negotiated

in order to perform even the simplest of operations, most of which should have been automated in the first place

Initial frustrations aside, the game offers 12 customisable instant skirmishes that soon prove the best way of testing your battle readiness

REGARDLESS OF WHICH RACE YOU LEAD, THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE IS THE SAME - ERADICATE THE OPPOSITION

The main game requires sprawling mu ti-mission campaigns to be undertaken, and regardless of which race you lead, the u timate objective is the same — eradicate the opposition. A hex map allows turn-based movement across the cosmos, with missions becoming available as your journey unfolds

Cleverly, specific tasks are optional, so can be tackled in any order, giving a reasonable degree of freedom. Unfortunately, it's not long before you're undertaking the all-too familiar 'routine patrol', 'seek and destroy' and 'transport the co onist' type of scenarios that have been flogged to death — originality here would have acted as something of a spur given the absence of cut scenes and full motion video, the omission of which conspire to dampen the atmosphere

BATTLE STATIONS Victory in battle earns you prestige points. These can be used to barter for essential repairs or vital upgrades. It's going to take a little more than some double-sided sticky tape to fic up this craft though. Fortunately, you can use prestige to acquire new ships too.
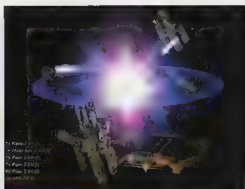
MAN ON A MISSION The mission objectives become repetitive all too quickly

GOING TO PIECES Each craft's shields are so effective it takes quite a while to break them down. Time's up for this little shuttle though, in fact you can see it fall apart before your very eyes when under sustained attack.

THINK-EM-UP Arcade gamers would do well to steer clear too, because the action unfolds to be a taut game of cat and mouse, rather than throwaway 'fire and forget' carnage. All the races enjoy a unique range of defensive and offensive weaponry and it's evident that a good deal of time was spent balancing arsenals that fall within early, middle, late and advanced categories. Thus, given the size of the craft involved and their faithfully recreated inability to manoeuvre speedily at close quarters, a good degree of forward planning and weapons management is required.

Victory in battle brings with it prestige points that can be used to garner repairs, upgrade systems and add vessels to your fleet – the hundreds of craft proving sufficient compensation for the ever-present feeling that despite representing any one of nine powerful factions, you are alone in a very large universe. Interplay has concentrated its efforts on the multiplayer aspects of gameplay rather than the singleplayer missions reviewed here, with their much vaunted Dynaverse 2 system promising to allow hundreds of players to compete online, forging alliances and conquering neighbouring territories. It may well be, then, that a future netplay review sends the multiplayer score into warp drive, but for now even Spock would agree that awarding a higher score would be highly illogical.

TURKEY SHOOT The range of missiles, phasers, mines, bombs and other weapons is impressive, and the lighting effects ensure they look good in action.

THE FINAL WORD Orion Pirates will doubtless find favour with fans of the prequels and trekkers alike. The suspicion is, though, that Interplay is targeting a huge potential online audience, and the generic and repetitive single player missions bear that theory out. Combined with the steep learning curve, unforgiving interface and mammoth amount of micro tasking, the lack of polish will deter many gamers from what is ultimately a competent but by the numbers affair.

DOG FIGHTING

All the races in the Star Trek universe boast spacecraft with unique offensive and defensive capabilities.

THE HYDRANS
Extremely effective at close quarter combat, the Hydran craft are fast and manoeuvrable. They also routinely carry fighters into battle with them.

THE KLINGONS
The Klingon craft reflect the fact that they are the sharks of the galaxy. With supreme offensive firepower, they're fast, responsive and heavily armed.

THE LYRANS
The Lyrans favour the use of small but heavily armoured fighter craft. They are capable of hit-and-run raids that rely on the element of surprise.

THE ORIONS
The Orion Space Pirates will steal and use any technology they find useful. They are a deadly and unpredictable foe for anyone foolish enough to cross them.

THE ROMULANS
Boasting the cloaking technology so sought after by their opponents, the Romulans favour stealth and games of cat and mouse rather than out and out conflict.

VERDICT

STAR TREK: STARFLEET COMMAND ORION PIRATES

TECH SPEC
- ■ **Minimum** 500MHz Pentium 3 64MB RAM
- ■ **Recommended** 700MHz Pentium 3 128MB RAM 16MB 3D Card
- ■ **Graphics** Software ✓ Direct3D ✓ Glide ✓ OpenGL ✓
- ■ **Sound** EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗

MULTIPLAYER ■ Maximum number of players PC LAN 6 Internet 6
■ Number of players per CD ■ CDs supplied with game ■ Minimum modem speed 33 kb/s

MULTIPLAYER RATING 6

HOW IT COMPARES

■ **Homeworld Cataclysm**
A stunningly portrayed universe plays hosts to real-time space battles.

■ **Star Trek: Birth of the Fed.**
A compulsive mix of Civilization style gameplay and famous Star Trek epics.

■ **Star Trek: Orion Pirates**
The third outing of the Starfleet Command series delivers little new or original.

■ **Imperium Galactica 2**
Gorgeous empire building in space, with a neat interface and tons of staying power.

PROS & CONS

+ It retains the familiar races and conventions of the TV series.

+ Background graphics are great and the pyrotechnics are spectacular.

+ It effortlessly balances turn-based strategy with real-time battles.

− The micromanagement of your ship is overwhelming.

− An impressive range of ships, but they perform in the same way.

− Needs an internet connection for online multiplayer play.

OVERALL

It fails to deliver anything new but may find favour with the online gaming community.

6

GRAND PRIX 3

GAME GLANCE

An official add-on for the PC's finest driving sim, bringing two new tracks, tweaked artificial intelligence and a bag of extras that didn't make it first time round.

- 2000's season data
- 2000's car liveries
- 2 new tracks
- revamped replay
- track set-up defaults
- 2001 data free

Race at Indianapolis and Kuala Lumpar with this Y2K strap-on pack for the much revered GP3.

There's no doubt Grand Prix 3 remains the daddy of F1 simulations. Eidos, Ubisoft and EA can pump out annual re-runs forever, but until they employ someone crazy enough to out-perv Geoff Crammond's attention to engine and suspension telemetry, it just isn't going to happen.

Cynical pundits of the mainstream press reckon Ferrari has the season in the bag because of a superior all-round car, leaving McLaren, Williams, Benetton and BAR to be mocked on a weekly basis by the *tifosi* faithful. In fact, the mega-chinned Red Barrons vehicle creates more downforce because cross-eyed Crammond hangs off the chassis with a ruler in his hand during qualifying. It's amazing the FIA hasn't disqualified the cheating. It's. And more so that this legendary obsessive of the virtual F1 game is still alive.

Someone at Codemasters attempted to mirror crazy Crammo's commitment to go-kart data by lying prostrate with a microphone to 'capture the real sound of a rally car' in a ditch during last year's championship. The clot lost two teeth and cut his face to shreds as the Ford Focus screamed past at 110mph, spraying grave-like bullets in all directions. Mind you, respect is due to Microprose and the Codies – their games feel more real for this unparalleled level of dedication.

UMPA, UMPA, RACE IN KUALA LUMPUR This GP3 clamp-on is a stand-alone game, but a distrustful publisher asks you to prove you bought the original by dropping the battered red CD into the drive and then swapping back to the new one. Not the best start

2000 SEASON

WORDS **will sargent**

UK RESISTANCE And yes, all the cars have – you guessed it – Y2K liveries, and driver names in place of baccy adverts.

BRIDGE-ING THE GAP It's Bridgestones all round in 2000. Let's hope McClaren go for the Michelins next season, for the sake of variety.

GENTLEMEN, START YOUR ENGINES The drivers love it. The fans love it – no less than a quarter of a million of them turned up to the USA's Indycar circuit at Indianapolis to watch proper cars rip up the tarmac in 2000. And this was after a ten-year absence from the States.

But brace yourselves, because once the overweight Securicor guard leaves your bedroom you'll find 'official' 2000 season data on your hard disk. All together now. "Ooooooo-oooooh", and two new circuits Kuala Lumpur, of Malaysia and Indianapolis, of the good ol' US of A ("Aahhhhhh"); updates to circuits including the longer pit lane exit at Interlagos and the revised chicanes at Monza (no giggling at the back, thank you); more circuit detail such as catch fencing, camera crews and buildings; pit-to-car radio chatter; extended EAX audio support for super soaraway 3D sound, debris collisions (!), enhanced replay controls; a new game in

which 22 players can challenge for a fastest lap (just in case you hadn't worked out how to use a pencil and paper), separate default car setup for each circuit (for days when you can't employ Geoff Crammond to hang off the rear spoiler), and the 'GPaedia' — more of which in a moment

Sarcasm from the class aside, the two worthy additions for GP3 devotees are the US and Malaysian tracks and new telemetry data, despite the latter now being well out of date, especially with EA's officially licensed 2001 game around the corner. Can the kids live without Juan Pablo for another year? Of course, this comes down to cost Bernie

Ecclestone charges EA many millions of pounds for the official licence - and even then the cars can't catch fire.

Petrol heads will be well aware of the Ecclestone Racing World Tour called by the USA on September 24, 2000 after a ten-year absence Staggeringly, this event drew more than a quarter of a million spectators, so it's appropriate that the PC's premier F1 game has been upgraded to include the high-speed newcomer

Running on a big PC (P3 500+), you'll recognise the course's eight-tier grandstand and capacious 300,000 seats, even if the

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

300MHz Pentium 2
32MB RAM

GP3's software support is unique. The game runs smoothly up to 25fps without a 3D card on a P3 500. Support is good for popular 3D cards but newer models struggle with the built-in calibration program

TRACK ATTACK: THE NEWCOMERS

KUALA LUMPAR

Often compared to Austria's A1 ring, the Malaysian Grand Prix's circuit in Kuala Lumpar offers up a challenging mix of bends and straights. Like Austria, you'll need maximum downforce.

INDIANAPOLIS

This massive Indycar track returned in 2000 after a ten-year absence. It can seat a staggering 300,000 fans. Just think how many donuts 300,000 US F1 fans eat in a day!

spectators are reminiscent of blurry mixed veg when tearing up the tarmac at 200mph. Anything less than this spec and the new course will look like something from Lego Land. It's worth noting that the graphics calibration program is still a tad stubborn, and it failed to sort out two of our PCs using a Radeon 64 and brand new Prophet 4000XT respectively.

Speedfreaks will love Indianapolis, in which

drivers brake from 187mph on the first straight into a 90-degree corner. The F1 route then cavorts around the original Indycar oval, travelling in the opposite direction to traditional US races. Malaysia's Sepang is an all-new circuit completed early in 1999. Bearing a similarity to the Austrian A1 Ring, it features a pair of long straights joined by a hairpin, along with a pleasant mix of corners ranging from tight to flowing.

MONEY FOR OLD DATA Two genuinely good courses then, but what else do you get for your 15 quid? According to the sales spiel, the game has had new graphics lavished upon it. A more detailed cockpit, more trackside objects and high resolution 'moving' pit crews add to showtime atmosphere.

Unfortunately, none of this visual frippery seems to make the experience any
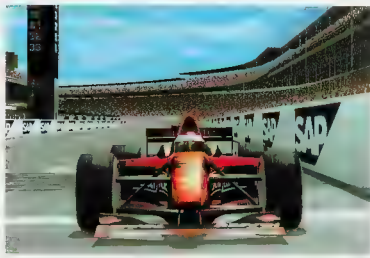
STRAIGHT AS AN ARROW A car readies itself to blast 200mph down the straight at Indianapolis and then handbrake turn into a 90-degree right-hander.

SEASON LIGHTLY Y2K is a season best forgot by fans of Jaguar.

"NO SUCH THING AS A FREE LAUNCH..."

Instead of blowing £15 on two new tracks and a pit-to-car radio system that squarks "watch out for debris" every ten free. Check out www.grandprix3.com for more. Star Wars fans should note the Darth Vader and Darth Maul liveries at

GP3 EDIT
www.grandprix3.com/en/software_best.php

The golden key to freebie heaven. Once mastered download car data, liveries, tracks, the works.

GP3 Track Editor v2
www.sportplanet.com/gp2/trackedit/gp3/

Edit and create tracks yourself, or load in tracks such as Phoenix 1991 and Oulton Park 1971

Advanced Physics Editor v1.2
www.grandprix3.com/en/software_f.pnp

Amazing physics detail for all F1 cars from the 1970s up to today's perfectly balanced McLarens and Ferarris

Toyota-Panasonic Pre-season 2002
www.grandprix3.com/en/software_3.php

Car, cockpit and menu art featuring next year's newcomer. Makes GP3 add-on look a little pointless, dunnit?

Year 2000 Carset v2
www.grandprix3.com/en/software_best.php

Well, kind of makes the add-on pack redundant, but it doesn't have the tweaked A1, new game mode and 'fast laps (!)

WHERE'S HEINZ? The Jordan team prepare for Frentzen's arrival, and 12 months on he's a gonner.

CAT LOVER No-one can deny the beauty of the Jaguar liveries. Shame about the reliability.

INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS The souped up wheel contains essential race information. From the top left we see position, speed (mph), lap number, fuel remaining (in laps), gear (in red), water temperature; Three assists are lit below this, along with lap time.

different. You'll notice from the shots littering these pages that nothing much has changed visually, although it is still a beautiful looking game when you run it at maximum resolution with all the reflections and textures turned up to the 'my PC cost me £2,000' setting.

So you are paying primarily for the new stats and pre-defined telemetry. The hardcore will find painstakingly accurate

TELE' ADDICTS Set up your fave car perfectly for each race with new telemetry data.

recommended car set-up data for each course useful, while polished AI and 'quick laps' – for up to 22 party players – will appear to everyone.

Opponent AI is, of course, a maker and breaker of F1 games. GP3 was far from perfect if better than its peers. The computer-controlled drivers do seem sharper now. They try and sneak past at every opportunity, even on rookie mode. This can be frustrating for

beginners as there's nothing more annoying than being shunted off a tight corner because another driver has failed to realise you've out-braked them.

GP3 guns for realism, and connoisseurs of the original will know that you spend as much time in the grave as on the tarmac, until you get to grips with each aspect of driving by turning the assists off one by one. The assists are a feature unique to Geoff Crammond's games and a reason for their success. Proper support for force feedback is also a welcome addition, but it was a crime not to have this sorted on such a specialist driving programme from the outset really.

THE FINAL WORD GP3 was a phenomenal achievement, and a rare commodity on the PC circuit – a true labour of love that honestly deserved the many awards lavished upon it. But in truth this 2000 season disc is a glorified patch, with a number of peripheral elements that must have missed the completion date of the first, and therefore we'd struggle to recommend it to anyone but the truly committed Cramm-ite who wants two new tracks and some improved AI.

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seconds, why not get these fun GP3 add-ons for the far right of this table.

Car setups for all tracks
www.grandprix3.com/en/software_best.php

Exactly what it says on the header. One hardcore racer has spent two years honing car setups on GP2 & 3

Darth Maul livery
www.angelfire.com

This will wrap your favourite Star Wars character around the body of an F1 car. Darth Vader also available!

MS FLIGHT SIMULATOR

WORDS **will sargent**

Practise saying "chicken or beef?" while waiting for these budget add-on packs to load.

ROYAL AIR FORCE 2000

■ Price: **£9.99** ■ Publisher: **Just Flight** ■ www.justflight.com

THE PLANES

Avro Shackleton
Avro Tutor
Bae Nimrod
English Electric Lightning
Hawker Hunter
Bae Hawk
Boeing Chinook
Bristol Beaufighter (x2)
Dh Mosquito (x2)
Eurofighter Typhoon
Gloster Javelin
Handley Page Halifax
Hawker Fury
Hawker Hart
Hawker Typhoon
Hunting Jet Provost
Spitfire Mk I & X
Tiger Moth (x2)
Vickers VC-10
Wellington
Westland Lysander

Cambridgeshire-based Just Flight should be given the keys to Seattle for its support of Microsoft's Flight Simulator series. It must be one of the west coast giant's favourite British relatives.

If you're into your planes, you name it, Just Flight's done it. The FS '98 and 2000

THE JET SET Both propeller and jet planes feature in this awesome collection of military machines.

connoisseur has been invited to fly birds from engineless gliders to nulking /M/s, safe in the knowledge that every buzzer and bell, down to the last crusty roll of bread in the galley, will be modelled in painfully accurate detail. Usually these cost around £25, but they're now available for £999 a piece.

First up is the RAF 2000 pack, which appeared in 2000 in the wake of FS2000's launch froth, as a kind of sequel to the much respected RAF Collection. Sales of the original game raised thousands for the RAF Benevolent Fund, and at £999 it should raise a little more for this worthwhile cause.

It's great value at the new price because you get 25 finely detailed craft, from lightning fast Lightnings to jeep carrying Chinooks. And for those with Combat Flight Simulator there are 15 free missions to get stuck into. Certain to save money on air show passes this summer.

IN A SPIN The authentically modelled Spitfire is unquestionably the highlight of this pack's collection.

VERDICT

OVERALL
The ideal partner for the £9.99 Luftwaffe collection, also featured here, although we must admit a preference for the former.

8

EXECUTIVE JETS

■ Price: **£9.99** ■ Publisher: **Just Flight** ■ www.justflight.com

THE PLANES

Cessna Citation X
Hawker 800XP

Fly like a billionaire in two exclusive private jets. Well, at least pretend you're flying a billionaire around in two glamourous private jets. Whether it's a weekend's skiing at Whistler mountain, British Columbia, or a few hours shopping in Milan, the

HIGH FLYERS Join the privileged few high above the clouds in the luxurious Cessna X and Hawker 800.

Cessna Citation X and Hawker 800XP are the opulent flying machines of choice. These machines fly fast and smooth. Panoramic 360-degree cockpit views enhance the experience of working with the Al Fayeds and 3D gear bays and rotating engine fans mean the models look real from the outside.

The flight deck is littered with VDUs and computers. In fact, because there are so many Pentiums controlling these two playboy planes you'll need to master the CTRL-ALT-DELETE trick while mid-flight.

Night lighting effects include landing lights, subtle cabin lights and working strobes and their programmable Flight Management Computers support Flight Sim 2000's detailed flight plans.

FLY BY NIGHT Landing lights and subtle cabin lights break the otherwise impenetrable darkness

VERDICT

OVERALL
These jets are stacked with features and fun to fly. It would have been nice to see a few more planes offered up.

5

SKY HIGH

In an add-on summer frenzy brought on by the late July heatwave, we ask "just how good is the rest of this budget collection?"

Ultimate Classic Wings
■ Price: £9.99
■ HIGH-flyers
28 aircraft types. Warriors, bombers, military jets, heavy bombers and bombers. A mass of variety.
OVERALL 9

Phoenix 757-200
■ Price: £9.99
■ HIGH-flyers
Multiple cockpit views and programmable Flight Management Computers bring variety.
OVERALL 4

Air Power - The Cold War
■ Price: £9.99
■ HIGH-flyers
A mix of 29 fighting machines from East and West. Combat missions for Combat Flight Sim owners.
OVERALL 8

2000 BUDGET SPECIAL

CLASSIC AIRLINERS 2000

■ Price: **£9.99** ■ Publisher: **Just Flight** ■ www.justflight.com

For fans of specific airlines – you scary, scary perverts, you – this add-on pack allows you to daub a floating metallic tube of choice in one of many well-known company liveries. There's paint jobs for everything from British

TO YOUR LEFT . Fly popular holiday routes around the world or just cruise around admiring the sights

Airways to Air Lingus, for a total of 13 major aircraft types. That's a grand total of 200-odd variants.

On installation you are asked which of the planes you want installing so you don't have to sacrifice 250MB of space immediately

The planes featured here span a fascinating time period for air travel, from 1940, when it was a relative luxury to take to the skies as a passenger, up to the 1980s, when virtually everyone could afford to hop on a 737 to Greece every year for a fortnight

It's equally amazing to see how basic the cockpits of the old twin prop giants compare with today's ILS-guided, joystick-controlled delights

You can guide classics such as the DC-3 and Trident, and the first 737 around the world or load them into 'problem' scenarios already stored in your Flight Sim 2000 folder

GROUNDED Airliners both past and present are ready and waiting on the runway for you to fly.

VERDICT

OVERALL
Fun for the traveller who insists on "having a go in the cockpit", irrespective of the softly spoken Oxbridge graduate at the controls.

7

THE PLANES
BAC 1-11
Boeing 707 & 720
Boeing 727
Boeing 737 200
De Haviland Comet
Douglas DC-3 & C-47
Douglas DC-4 & C-54
Douglas DC-8
Hawker Sidley Trident
Lockheed L-188 Electra
Sud Aviation Caravelle
Vickers VC-10
Vickers Viscount

LUFTWAFFE COLLECTION

■ Price: **£9.99** ■ Publisher: **Just Flight** ■ www.justflight.com

Better get wrapped up warm before boarding the Albatross Dva because this 'tail-wheeler' is an open air experience, and a twitchy mover, previously only available to the cream of flyboy Bosch pilots. But the fun doesn't stop there because this Luftwaffe

OLD AND NEW High rise tower blocks juxtapose with this classic World War One bi-plane

mega pack also contains the quite ludicrous Flettner heli-plane, which looks more like a time machine than anything else Maybe it was

Of the four budget packages we have examined in detail this month this one probably offers the best value for money because it contains the aforementioned wonders among bi-planes, jets, zeppelins and helicopters

Stars from 1918 to the rip-roaring EF2000s of today can be flown alongside World War 2 fighters, bombers and there's even a MiG 29 in unified German colours.

In total, there are 70 planes, all boasting accurate textures and flight dynamics. Even the sounds of the originals have been sampled accurately to add authenticity

BOMBS NOT AWAY! Unless you own MS Combat Simulator, don't expect to see any dogfighting action.

VERDICT

OVERALL
Amazing value for money, with some truly fun craft to try out. The pack would be worth it for the superb EuroFighter2000 alone.

8

PC GAMEPLAY GOLD

THE PLANES
Albatross Dva
BV 138 Flying Boat
CH-53 helicopter
c-160 Transporter
Fiat G-91
Fokker Eindecker
Fokker Tridecker
F-84 Thunderflash
F-104 Starfighter
FW190
Flettner F 282 helicopter
Heinkel 111
JU-87 Stuka
Me262 Jet
M G 29
RF4E Phantom
Tornado
EF2000 Typhoon
V1 Flying Bomb
Zeppelin

Guardians of the Sky
■ Guardians of the Sky
■ Price: £9.99
■ HIGH-POINTS
Sneaking Shackletons, Nimrods and Sentries can be sent close to China. Not as much fun as true battle sims.
OVERALL 3

Airbus 2000
■ Airbus 2000
■ Price: £9.99
■ HIGH-POINTS
Convince yourself that these tin cans can stay in the sky. 58 planes to crash.
OVERALL 6

Final Approach
■ Final Approach
■ Price: £9.99
■ HIGH-POINTS
Learn how to read flight charts, then create your own and print them out. Very popular add-on.
OVERALL 7

L-1011 TriStar
■ L-1011 TriStar
■ Price: £9.99
■ HIGH-POINTS
Take to the skies in this popular people shifter of the seventies. Includes 100/200/250 and 500 variants.
OVERALL 5

■ Out: **Now** ■ Pr.ce: **£4.99** ■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **FASA Interactive** ■ www.infogrames.com

MECHCOMMANDER GOLD

Saddle up your Mech once again as the original Mechcommander receives an impressive make-over – as the sequel is launched on full-price – plus a stack of new missions and features that are guaranteed to lure you back.

WORDS **martyn clayden**

GAME GLANCE

A renegade colonel is running amok on a distant planet and you are put in charge of organising a Mech force to take him out and discover his plans

■ 6 new chassis
■ 12 new missions
■ 1 mission editor
■ 20 scenarios
■ the tasty commander is back

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

133MHz Pentium 32MB RAM

Not much room for manoeuvre as the only reductions you can make are on the game volume (effects, radio messages), screen brightness and the difficulty settings But as the minimum requirements are for a P133 you should have little trouble getting the full whammy.

Just when you thought you were due a holiday after completing the battle for supremacy with Clan Smoke Jaguar, you get dragged back in by your commander. It seems a rogue colonel, Marcus Colare, has taken contro of Star League planet and nas to be stopped

The original Mechcommander was renowned for its great attention to deta l, powerful soundtrack and impressive machines. But it was also difficult to master and had no in-game save facility which was especially frustrating on long missions Thankfully FASA has addressed a lot of these concerns and the Gold edit on has added 12 new missions that use six new Mechs and some new weapons

The first improvement to the game is the ability to vary the difficulty settings – there are three and the easy setting is really very simple. They've also introduced a system of waypoints to help marshal your troops – a serious omission in the original. Ammunition

CROSS-FIRE The secret to a good Mech punch-up is to mix your weighty with your nippy killers.

ROAD CLOSED This assault vehicle thought he'd sneak through the lines if he followed the road.

POWER DOWN Generally it's not worth shooting buildings, but a power station makes a good bang.

OIL OVER AGAIN The great thing about oil tankers is they'll destroy most of the opposition when you shoot them. Here, the unsuspecting enemy finds a mass of its arsenal decimated in just a few seconds.

was always tight before and you could waste a ot by having to burn forests to reach your target. Now you can order your Mechs to use energy, thereby conserving the ammo

The other improvement to the game is the use of hotkeys for certain mission commands, such as the use of sensor probes, camera drones and artillery strikes. A mission editor has been added to create your own scenarios for the 20 missions (double the previous total) of the multiplayer option, which should ensure extra longevity to play with your pals

Mech fans will be frustrated that there's still no in-game saving option, although

the use of repair bays and vehicles will allow you to rescue some of your damaged machines from the scrapheap before the end of a mission.

THE FINAL WORD The gameplay and soundtrack remain superb, creating plenty of tension as you creep through the fog of war with satisfying booms during combat. The FMV briefings with the delicious commanding officer ensure the new missions create that air of authenticity, and if you're not burning the midnight oil on this game then you're not alive.

VERDICT
MECHCOMMANDER GOLD

TECH SPEC
■ **Minimum** 133MHz Pentium 32MB RAM
■ **Recommended** 166MHz Pentium 64MB RAM
■ **Graphics** Software ✓ Direct3D ✗ Glide ✗ OpenGL ✓
■ **Sound** EAX (SBLive) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗

MULTIPLAYER ■ Max mum number of players PC 2 LAN - 2 Internet - 2
■ Number of players per CD ■ CDs supplied with game 1 ■ Minimum modem speed 28.8 kb/s

MULTIPLAYER RATING 6

HOW IT COMPARES

■ **Mechcommander**
Sol id but demanding construct 'n' f ght action strategy with impressive effects.

■ **Mechcommander Gold**
All the joys of the original with 12 extra missions and better gameplay

■ **Mechwarrior 3**
It's tough in the 31st century as you climb in the cockpit of 18 BattleMechs

■ **Mechwarrior 4**
The Clan invasion's over but you return to chaos, murder and treason at home

PROS & CONS

+ Waypoint systems allow you to deploy troops more effectively.

+ Ammo conservation allows you to spend more time fighting.

+ 12 new missions fit into the original with obvious enhancements.

+ Excellent soundtrack propels you on your mission with hackles rising.

− If you've played the origina, then you might not want to upgrade

− No in-game save option cou d mean hours of frustration.

OVERALL
If you were delighted with the first release you may not want the add-on, but if this if your first visit to Mechland, dig deep.

8

BREAKOUT

The classic arcade game gets a 3D makeover, a fun storyline and surrealistic locations to make it more accessible to a new generation.

words **martyn clayden**

It's highly fashionable to try resurrecting games from the infancy of PCs and hoping they'll find some appeal in a market saturated with high-end Command & Conquer clones and first-person shooters.

Breakout is likely to succeed, thanks to the witty idea of turning the bat into a character who at the outset troddles off to rescue his chums that have been thrown into prison by the evil Batnix. Each wall of bricks the hero destroys opens up another location for him to crawl into and start the process over

In this way, he manages to travel to an Egyptian pyramid, a dank prison cell, a dragon-ruled castle, a farm populated by aggressive chickens (!) and even the depths of outer space. OK, none of this is rocket science but it does succeed in keeping the interest in what is a very repetitive formula.

Graphically the 3D effects do wonders for what has always been very flat gameplay, including explosive effects when things get blown up. It's especially impressive when the hero is being chased by a wolf in the early stages and you have to collect balls while looking over his shoulder

There's also a 'league' table' structure (from beginner to expert) that you can climb up as you progress, which encourages you to score as many points as possible between rounds – plus a multiplayer option for four people.

This is the kind of game you can have 'on tap' to pull out when you've got ten minutes free at work and want to scale another level or two. Trouble is, it has the potential to be a lot more addictive than you suspect.
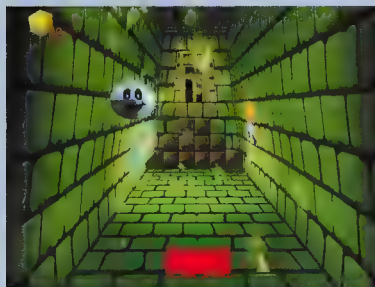
PRISON BLUES To start, a smiley ball enters your cell and shows you how to batter your way out. Nice.
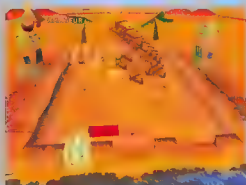
PYRAMID PUMMEL It took years to build this up and our intrepid hero demolishes it in seconds.

VERDICT

TECH SPEC
■ **Minimum** 233MHz Pentium 2   32MB RAM
■ **Recommended** 266MHz Pentium 2 64MB RAM 8MB 3D card
■ **Graphics** Software ✓ Direct3D ✓ 3dfx ✓ OpenGL ✗
■ **Sound** EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗

VALUE FOR MONEY
Atari spent a lot of effort to update this former PC classic and, on the whole, it has paid off handsomely, giving a refreshing overhaul to an ageing concept.

6

MIGHT & MAGIC 7: FOR BLOOD & HONOR

The apparently endless series of spells 'n' slashing role-playing action fails once again to breathe new life into a desperately tedious and extremely dated format.

words **martyn clayden**

It's astounding that 3DO seems to feel there's any mileage to be made out of this stale formula when the likes of Baldur's Gate and Diablo 2 are clearly the future of this genre. The plot, such as it is, involves the usual band of mismatched sub-Tolkien species (human, goblin, dwarf and elf) setting out on several quests

The first of these is a glorified treasure hunt where a shopping list of artefacts has to be gathered and presented to the judge, who will then award your team a fiefdom to rule. You then have to decide whether to support the light or dark side of The Force (sorry, wrong fantasy) before combating a range of monsters.

The main problem is that despite efforts to jazz up the graphics with 3D effects, both characters and locations still look blocky and two-dimensional The series continues to have the main action take place in barely two-thirds of the screen and the keyboard direction arrows make movement jerky and unstable This is especially a problem when you're being assaulted on all sides by rabid bats and legions of the undead.

If the characters were suitably engaging and the storyline gripping, then at a pinch you might be inclined to overlook the game's other shortcomings. But the most fun you can have with them is swapping their race, class, appearance and voice

BURNING AMBITION Joining one of the guilds will improve your spells – or singe your eyebrows.

MIGHTY MOZZIES They don't look much, but even with a Spell of Rentakill, these have a lethal sting.

VERDICT

TECH SPEC
■ **Minimum** 133MHz Pentium   32MB RAM
■ **Recommended** 200MHz Pentium 64MB RAM 8MB 3D card
■ **Graphics** Software ✓ Direct3D ✓ 3dfx ✓ OpenGL ✗
■ **Sound** EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗

VALUE FOR MONEY
Despite attempts to resuscitate a dying formula, there's little magic and only slight might left in this feeble fantasy. Time to send it to Mordor.

5

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£4.99** ■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **Atari** ■ www.infogrames.com

ATARI ARCADE HITS

Six Atari old timers are back on your PC so you can see how far we've come from the days of Pong.

WORDS **martyn clayden**

I t's only when you look back to when gam ng was crawl ng out of the binary code soup that you realise just how basic those first games were – and now Atari owned most of them

These six games were classics of the r day Asteroids was a shoot-'em-up where you rotated a triangle in the middle of the screen

and b asted misshapen blobs that were floating towards you. Centipede went along Space Invaders lines, where you had to be quick on the draw to shoot its segments before it (or a spider) ate you. Missile Command required you to to stop incom ng nuclear missiles destroying California (it caused many n ghts of cold sweat n its day), and n Tempest you rotated around a peculiar shaped geometric 'tunnel' from wh ch nasti e fortresses were trying to shoot you. These must have been paranoid times indeed

Slightly m lder combat was offered up by Pong, the famous game of b rd's-eye table tenn s, and Super Breakout where a bat and

ball were used to demolish a success on of descending walls

Althou gh a few sweeteners have been thrown into the m x (an Atari theme pack to customise your PC, a VR trip round the archives and the chance to post your scores on the internet), this is u timately a trip down memory lane

You' be hard pressed to spend long on these action dinosaurs without returning to a quick burst of Half-Life or Severance. Good for older gamers who ke to rem nd us what the good o d days ought to have been like

VIRTUAL REALITY You may be confused while playing these, thinking you're actually in a film.

PONG

THE ATARI POWER Make sure you have a 128MB Kyro 3 3D graphics card to run this little monster.

VERDICT

TECH SPEC
■ **Minimum** 133MHz Pentium 16MB RAM
■ **Recommended** 166MHz Pentium 32MB RAM
■ **Graphics** Software ✓ Direct3D ✗ 3Dfx ✗ OpenGL ✗
■ **Sound** EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗

VALUE FOR MONEY
It's possible to raise a cheer for games like Centipede and Super Breakout, but most of us thought we'd seen the last of that annoying Pong. To be kept in the attic.

4

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£4.99** ■ Publisher: **Sold Out** ■ Developer: **Awesome** ■ www.sold-out.co.uk

PC GAMEPLAY GOLD

JIMMY WHITE'S 2 CUEBALL

No, it's not a new game mode but a chance to play either snooker or pool in full 3D realism in the setting of a luxury mansion – Jimmy's tidy little pad, undoubtedly.

WORDS **martyn clayden**

T he first thing to confront you when you begin this game is an ornate entrance hall. No, it's not Caesar 3, but a way of show-casing the time, effort and grandeur spent on making this mix of snooker and pool more than a trip down to the local working man's club

As you explore the mansion you discover different games rooms decorated to su t the subject matter. The snooker room is a 19th

century marvel featur ng a piano, fully playable darts board and draughts. Down the hall is a 50's style bar where the poo table s housed, p us an early arcade first-person shooter, Dropzone and a one-armed bandit. An nteractive jukebox belts out h ts

But this is just the icing on the cake before you comp etely launch into the game, where a floating camera a ters the viewing angle while you set up your next shot. The main innovation s the use of a pair of

disembodied white gloves to act either as an u more (chalking c es, re-spotting bal s) or a player. They are eerily lifelike

Shots are established through icons or by us ng the mouse for a combination of the two) Trick shots, spins and power shots can be learnt and executed in minutes, and all within these sumptuous surroundings.

WHERE'S ME ARMS? The white gloves offer a useful but fairly spooky virtual referee or player
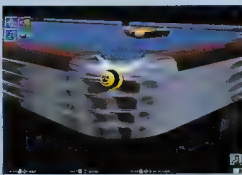
BALL RIGHTS This ball has demanded its liberation, turned into a bee and flown away.

VERDICT

TECH SPEC
■ **Minimum** 166MHz Pentium 32MB RAM 2MB 3D card
■ **Recommended** 266MHz Pentium 2 32MB RAM 4MB 3D card
■ **Graphics** Software ✓ Direct3D ✓ 3dfx ✓ OpenGL ✗
■ **Sound** EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗

VALUE FOR MONEY
Jimmy White would be proud to have this game on his PC while he limbers up for the next tournament as it combines realistic gameplay with imaginative settings.

9

TRANSPORT TYCOON DELUXE

What Sid Meier did for the railroads, Chris Sawyer does for road, rail, air and sea. It looks and feels more like Sim City with a host of different terrains to experiment with.

GAME GLANCE

Create a transportation system that will be the envy of your pals - rail roads, bus routes, airlines and shipping routes - and even design your own scenarios.

- 4 game worlds
- 1 scenario editor
- 2-player option
- 1000s of shares
- transport sweets in Toyland

WORDS martyn clayden

For such a richly varied game, it's such an annoyance that this is essentially a DOS-based sim. One glance at the graphics and you know you're in Sim City territory. Instead of focusing on just one industry, designer Chris Sawyer has gone flat out to create four completely separate transport systems which can all be interconnected. Produce tracks and trains to transport coal to your power station, connect two local towns by their own airfields, ferry passengers across a waterway with your own ships and establish bus routes to get people to work and the mail delivered

It all works off a series of icons and windows that old hands at this game will take very little time to master (there's even a video tutorial for each system that explains the lot in ten minutes). This De Luxe version introduces three new 'worlds' to exploit - a sub-arctic mountainous snowscape, deserts and rainforests, and Toyland (which looks a cross between Disney and Noddy)

Further innovation comes in the form of a scenario editor where the terrain can suit your imagination. The time-line of the game stretches from 1950 to the 21st century (you

can move the start time to 1975 with the editor) and whether you succeed in beating off the opposition and becoming the tycoon depends on how ambitious you want to be with your routes and how cunning you are when it comes to buying and selling.

Gameplay is easy and this is the kind of sim that very quickly becomes addictive. OK, it may not be on the grand scale of some of the individual transport sims, but there's more than enough to keep you happy for weeks, without being completely buried in statistics.

WHERE'S THE ZOMBIES? This is certainly not a title for the impatient, as it involves plenty of thought

RED TAPE Fans of local government and high bureaucracy will relish the transport problems.

VERDICT

TECH SPEC
■ **Minimum** 486DX2 66MHz 4MB RAM
■ **Recommended** 133MHz Pentium 8MB RAM
■ **Graphics** Software ✓ Direct3D ✗ 3dfx ✗ OpenGL ✗
■ **Sound** EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗

VALUE FOR MONEY
It's hard to imagine a sim that's as good a bargain. Fine graphics, engaging and taxing gameplay, plenty of room for creativity and humour. And you can be the boss!

8

GAME GLANCE

Guide your hero Tomb Raider-like between the material and the spectral plains as you solve puzzles, wipe out enemies and gather their souls for your dark master

- 5 vampire clans
- 2 parallel worlds
- 3D dark graphics
- 1 useful 'glide' skill
- bad case of rotting jaw

LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER

Part two of the Kain saga ditches the top-down RPG and features a vampire gathering the souls of his old comrades.

WORDS martyn clayden

If you played Blood Omen, then you'll know that the dark overlord Kain tamed the human race with his legions of vampires. As time advanced, Kain and his elite began evolving into new forms with new powers, but when lieutenant Raziel was given wings ahead of his boss, Kain hurled him into a lethal whirlpool.

We now move into classic Tomb Raider territory, complete with moving blocks, climbing

and leaping over gaps. The main differences being the ability to shift between worlds and the inability to vanquish your foes by conventional means.

Initially you can only achieve this by using fire, sunlight and water as weapons, or by impaling your enemies on sharp stake-like objects. Later you gain access to Kain's powerful light sword that slices and dices very effectively.

But it also suffers from Tomb Raider's notorious blockiness, the half-'n-half-out of

walls problem and the free-ranging camera angles that frequently point the wrong way

The unorthodox combat and world swapping make for an entertaining alternative to the usual action adventure mode. Fans of the original game may feel cheated though that the RPG element has vanished and that the gameplay can become repetitive
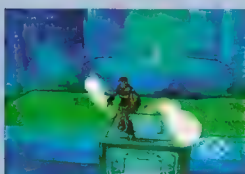
LARA WHO? Tomb-Raider elements have replaced Blood Omen's role-playing gameplay.

SERVE WITH GARLIC If you enjoy burning vampires (and who doesn't?) then you'll enjoy this.

VERDICT

TECH SPEC
■ **Minimum** 200MHz Pentium 2 16MB RAM
■ **Recommended** 266MHz Pentium 2 32MB RAM 8MB 3D card
■ **Graphics** Software ✓ Direct3D ✗ 3dfx ✓ OpenGL ✗
■ **Sound** EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗

VALUE FOR MONEY
If you're a Buffy fan you'll enjoy throwing vampires on to stakes and burning them with fire and water, but the adventure side will probably leave you annoyed.

7

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£4.99** ■ Publisher: **Sold Out** ■ Developer: **Cinematix** ■ www.sold-out.co.uk

REVENANT

It's an obvious Diablo clone, but an enjoyable one that draws on elements of Mortal Kombat-style combat and the usual dungeon role-playing game backgrounds.

wоrds **scott montgomery**

GAME GLANCE

A damned soul is resurrected 1000 years after his death to rescue the kidnapped daughter of an influential warlord and reluctantly agrees to accept his lone quest.

■ 50 other characters
■ 25 species of foes
■ 1 dead hero
■ 40 different weapons
■ 1 game editor
■ er.. the hero's dead...

A t first glance you think you've seen it all before -- the Diablo style graphics, the hero waiting for you to choose what clothes, armour, weapon and spells he'll use and the non-playable characters who'll provide hints waiting to be interrogated.

The opening full-motion video dramatically portrays the tortured anti-hero Locke spread in crucifixion pose over a Hellish inferno, thus setting up his role as reluctant would be saviour of a woman abducted by a sinister religious cult.

He has to achieve his quest alone, relying purely on his combat skills and use of magical spells. Instead of the standard point-n'-click fighting, you can draw on a range of combo moves that are improved and enhanced the more you use them. The same applies to the magic you weave, which evolves from four basic power spells.

Although the artificial intelligence is adaptable enough to vary the attacking powers of your opponents, it doesn't take too much effort to overcome them. Some of the adventure elements that have been thrown into the mix add an additional layer of complexity and the gloomily atmospheric locations (dangerous caverns and ancient ruins) preserve the air of expectant doom.

If you haven't saved the money for Diablo 2 or Planescape Torment, then it is worth shelling out a fiver for this highly entertaining and often original variant on the role-playing game formula. It's not entirely bug free and it's not too challenging but it does restore the balance of combat over quest.
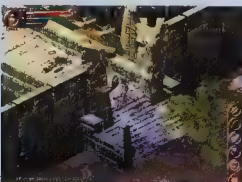
RELUCTANT WARRIOR Dragged back from 1000 nights of pleasure to find some simpering maiden.

RUINOUS COMBAT No expense has been spared to devise detailed backgrounds of gloom and grandeur.

VERDICT

TECH SPEC
■ **Minimum** 233MHz Pentium 2 32MB RAM
■ **Recommended** 266MHz Pentium 2 64MB RAM 4MB 3D card

■ **Graphics** Software ✓ Direct3D ✗ 3dfx ✗ OpenGL ✗
■ **Sound** EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗

VALUE FOR MONEY
A good stack of spectacular spells and fighting skills allied to an unusual storyline ensure that Revenant is a cut above the also-rans in this genre.

7

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£9.99** ■ Publisher: **Virgin Interactive** ■ Developer: **Computer Artworks** ■ www.vie.co.uk

EVOLVA

Kill, mutate and survive are the central themes of this off-beat shoot-'em-up where your ever-evolving hit squad has the not-too-pleasant task of wiping out the monster offspring of an alien virus.

wоrds **craig vaughan**

GAME GLANCE

Evil guardians have occupied a planet threatening to spawn and colonise further and your team of four genohunters must eradicate them by absorbing and mutating them

■ 12 lands to explore
■ 4 creatures to control
■ 10 unusual weapons
■ 9 multiplayer missions
■ the mucus gun rocks

I f nothing else, Evolva gets ten points for originality of concept. The story is that technology has advanced to the point where gene splicing and mutating is commonplace, so when a planet has been taken over by a dangerously expanding alien entity, you send in the Genohunters to sort it out. These galactic warriors have the ability to kill their prey and extract from its DNA any qualities that will enhance their own survival skills. In this instance there are four in the team — any of which can be individually controlled -- and you decide how you want to augment their agility, speed, smartness or strength.

The mutations include such surreal effects as having overdeveloped legs to jump higher. In the early stages you come across small groups of the monstrous guardians established by the evil extraterrestrial, and you do a measure of problem solving and protection.

Graphically, the predominantly blue-green colours make a welcome change from the autumnal/gloomy schemes offered by most shooters and the complete bizarreness of the locations is refreshing. But the more you play the more it all looks the same (as does the gameplay) and you know replayability is not its strength.

You'll be easily seduced into this game by its striking graphics, ease of the interface and the chance to blow away lots of alien opposition. The mutations offer infinite scope in the evolution of your strike force but you may that you've had enough after four or five fairly linear levels.

BA-BOOM! There's nothing quite like the satisfying explosion you get when you mix the right vegetation. The carnage visuals are still particularly pleasing

VERDICT

TECH SPEC
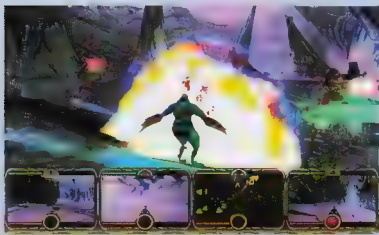■ **Minimum** 266MHz Pentium 2 32MB RAM 4MB 3D card
■ **Recommended** 500MHz Pentium 3 64MB RAM 16MB 3D card

■ **Graphics** Software ✗ Direct3D ✓ 3dfx ✓ OpenGL ✓
■ **Sound** EAX (SBLive!) ✗ Aureal 3D ✗ Dolby Surround ✗

VALUE FOR MONEY
The industry flourishes from bursts of innovation and Evolva is to be high-fived for devising a clever method of upgrading a controllable raiding party.

7

NETPLAY »

- Beef up your browser p106
- World War 2 Online Blitzkrieg p102
- War Birds 3 .... p100
- International Cricket Game II p100
- Mods p104

Global Online

The first World Cyber Games is under way with hundreds of Olympians competing for huge cash prizes. With these new cyber sports becoming ever more popular, is the stereotypical view of online gamers as solitary, girlfriendless geeks a case of mistaken identity? Or can competitive gaming be classed as a true sport with fame and fortune waiting for those who excel? Write in or send us an email with your thoughts.

WORDS darren evans

CYBER GAMES IMMINENT!

THE CONTEST BEGINS TO FIND 20 TOP BRITS TO TRAVEL TO THE FIRST WORLD CYBER GAMES IN KOREA.

LANARENA, ONE OF THE UK'S FASTEST growing gaming cyber-cafe chains and a member of the Virtual Gaming Association, has been chosen as organiser and host for the qualifying events to find the best British gamers to enter the world cyber games. The games will be held at Seoul, Korea from 4-10th December with an impressive prize of $300,000 up for grabs. The UK qualifiers started on August 11th with a Counter-Strike tournament and further qualifying events are being held in September for other games including Age of Empires 2, Unreal Tournament, FIFA 2001 and Quake 3 (see below for dates). Cash prizes are also available for these qualifying events with £5000 for 1st place, £1000 for second, £500 for third, £350 for fourth and £150 for 5-8th with the winners of the first, second and third places being sent to the world games with all expenses covered. www.lanarena.co.uk

September Qualifier dates at all VGA venues:

1st	FIFA 2001
8th	Age of Empires 2
15th	Unreal Tournament
22nd	Quake 3
29th	Counter Strike

ADSL ANSWERS Brush up on the technology before you buy or find answers to problems if you're already wired.

BAFFLED BY BROADBAND?

IF YOU'RE THINKING OF UPGRADING TO BROADBAND BUT HAVE QUESTIONS GALORE BEFORE YOU TAKE THE PLUNGE, CHECK OUT THE WEB.

Setting yourself up as with ADSL can be a harrowing experience, but hopefully our informative guide on p106 will smooth the whole process for you. However, if you'd like more information or have specific problems with connection or installed equipment, you can find further help on the web. And it pays to be informed. One member of the PC GAMEPLAY staff had an utter nightmare with his ADSL installation. However, the problem was due to incompatible settings on the PC system in question. So check the web before you buy to find out all you need to

know if you're already wired and are experiencing problems, check out some of the many ADSL websites available, like adslguide.org.uk. A visit to the forums will usually reveal someone who has had similar problems and maybe has an answer for you. If not, you can post your dilemma and you'll soon have a barrage of helpful suggestions and tips from other visitors. Check out the website below for tips, frequently asked questions, the latest driver downloads and much more www.adslguide.org.uk

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NEED HELP? EASY!

RUBBISH AT ALL THINGS GAMING? WE'VE GOT CHEATS FOR ALL THE MAJOR TITLES.

We hope you're enjoying our packed tips book, free with every issue of PC GAMEPLAY As you can see, it's full of guides and cheat codes for the very latest and greatest PC titles, but did you know we also have a list of tips and codes on our website? Pay us a visit and check out our Solutions link for guides galore, all in a thoroughly helpful alphabetical listing. We have hundreds of vital

tips, guides and solutions for virtually every major PC game out there, so you should be able to finally whip that irritating little creature. While you're visiting the site, be sure to visit our forums and let us know what you think of the magazine and ways that we can make it better. Any comments are more than welcome www.pcgameplay.co.uk

TO THE RESCUE Check out our huge online listing of tips and cheat codes

"SOFTWARE TO GO WITH BT"

BT IS SET TO PROVIDE ITS BROADBAND SUBSCRIBERS WITH SOFTWARE FOR RENT VIA STREAMING TECHNOLOGY.

Exent Technologies is a leading developer of applications-on-demand (AoD) technology and a collaboration with BT will allow the telecom giant to bring games, lifestyle and business applications to its broadband users via the company's website at www.btopenworld.com. The service is provisionally called "Software to Go" and began on 25th July for a two-month trial. If successful, the service will allow users to rent popular software without having to pay the full purchase price. The trial will be available in various pay options such as pay-per-hour, per-weekend or per-week. For the first time, the service will also use BT's innovative eWallet payment feature. Could this refinance the games industry? **www.btopenworld.com**
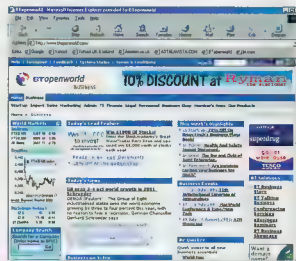
ONLINE RENTALS Subscribers to BT's broadband services could soon rent software rather than having to buy it outright.

BENCH MARKED BY MICROSOFT

EVERYDAY PARK BENCHES MAY SOON BE TRANSFORMED INTO FREE INTERNET TERMINALS COURTESY OF MICROSOFT.

WORKBENCH 2000 Free internet access could be coming to a park bench near you soon

Park your butt on a bench at Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds and you could soon plug your laptop into it for free internet access if Microsoft's UK web porta, msn.co.uk, has its way. The publicity stunt is aimed at highlighting the fact that the internet is becoming more and more integrated into our daily routines. "The bench is a metaphor for the internet moving into everyday life," explained an MSN spokesman. Final installation looks set to complete some time between September and October. Just remember to bring your sandwiches along **www.msn.co.uk**

WANNA BET?

YOUR ONLINE GAMES SKILLS COULD EARN YOU BIG BUCKS WITH ZOOGI ONLINE GAMBLING.

Put your money where your mouth's by taking on opponents for cash courtesy of Zoogi. Visit the website, download the Zoog software (a mere 200k) and set up your account, and then play one-on-one against friends or complete strangers and bet on the outcome. Just choose an opponent, place your bet and play on any site. You then simply declare the winner and the cash is theirs. You can play with real cash, which you deposit into your Zoogi account with your credit card, or you can simply do it for fun with virtual money. It's probably best to use the latter option until you've got the hang of it all, otherwise you might find a few irritating little additions to your credit card bill come the end of the month. The Zoogi software also allows you to keep track of friends online and more. Is this a brave new world in online gaming? **www.zoogi.com**

BEAT MORRIS Zoogi allows you to play various games and bet online.

GETTING IT ON

QUICK TIPS FOR GETTING ONLINE TO PLAY YOUR FAVOURITE GAME.

FEATURED SITE: ZONE.COM
WHO: MICROSOFT WHERE: ZONE.MSN.COM

Microsoft's Zone.Com is a good example of how easy things are becoming for those wanting to just get online and play. Supported games are helpfully categorised by genre so it's simply a question of clicking on a game name and you're whisked away to the dedicated room where you can choose from various modes of play. You can join any games in progress or host your own. Once you choose, your game is even launched automatically for you. How helpful is that?

As if a cool area to find opponents isn't enough, the Zone.Com team works hard to supply each game room with lots of related news and information. You'll find game tips and strategies, news, downloads such as add-ons and even shopping areas for buying expansion packs. And if you're new to all this online games business there's extensive help on getting started. Events and tournaments are also frequently held with many prizes up for grabs.

Even if your game isn't directly supported, you can visit the LAN areas for DirectPlay and IPX network support to connect directly with friends. If you want a stress free, information-packed and fun online session then pay Zone.Com a visit.

HELPING HAND

Some games have built-in server-searching features, some don't. If you're having problems finding a place, or people, to play your favourite game with, then check out the following handy software, which should help you locate a games pal.

GAMESPY ARCADE
www.gamespy.com
Possibly the only online gaming utility you'll need. Supports hundreds of titles, sorts your server lists so you can find the fastest game servers and much more.

GAMESPY 3D
www.gamespy.com
Similar to Gamespy Arcade but unlike its big brother, which supports everything this does and more, this one mainly focuses on the many 3D titles available on the PC.

You can also check out dedicated websites where like-minded online gamers usually hang out. Point your browser at these links to find a whole host of information on various titles.

THE PLACE	THE WEBSITE
BARRY'S WORLD	WWW.BARRYSWORLD.COM
BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT	WWW.BATTLE.NET
EIDOS INTERACTIVE	WWW.EIDOSINTERACTIVE.COM
ELECTRONIC ARTS	WWW.EA.COM
INTERPLAY	WWW.INTERPLAYGAMES.COM
MICROSOFT GAMING ZONE	HTTP://ZONE.MSN.COM/
THRUSTWORLD	WWW.THRUSTWORLD.CO.UK
WESTWOOD	WWW.WESTWOOD.COM

BEEF UP YOUR BROWSER

Make your browsing faster, safer and much more fun.

AT THE MOVIES

Many developers working on a game in progress often place a video trailer on the official website for you to download and check out. Max Payne (maxpayne.godgames.com) and Duke Nukem Forever (www.3drealms.com) are two examples. The same goes for movies. Lord of the Rings is particularly popular at the moment with tens of thousands of people having downloaded the numerous trailers released at the official site. There's a wide range of video formats though, so you'll need the right software to view them. Here are three of the most popular: Microsoft's Windows Media Player, Apple's Quicktime and Real Networks' Real Player. So what is the difference between them all?

Windows Media Player version 7.1
An essential tool for anyone who likes downloading video trailers for their favourite games in development, or upcoming movies. It also acts as an mp3 player too.

Quicktime version 5
Lots of websites use Apple's QuickTime movie format, which usually have .mov at the end of their filename and this is the player to view them. Quicktime 5 also allows you to view 360 degree images, such as those found on the Star Wars Ga axies site at www.starwarsga axies.com

Realplayer version 5
Similar to Windows Media Player in it's support of mp3 music files. Many websites use Rea.player's format for streaming video and audio technology although it isn't really used much for downloadable trailers because it's of a slightly lower quality than mpeg and avi.

When it comes to surfing web pages there's one very important piece of software that is truly the window to the web world - your browser. So with that in mind, here are a couple of information- packed pages that reveal some of the essential add-ons and top tips that will make your surfing sessions easier and more enjoyable.

Most people navigate their way through the wondrous world wide web using their mouse to click on the many navigation buttons and windows within Internet Explorer (IE for finger-saving purposes) There are, however, a few handy little keyboard shortcuts that once memorised, will have you zipping around websites like a pro. Our favourite is Alt+D (that's the Alt and the D key pressed together), which instantly highlights IE's address bar ready for you to type in a new website name. Much quicker than moving the mouse pointer up there, clearing the current contents and typing a whole new name in

F11 instantly makes IE go into full screen mode. We often use this as a quick way to view websites that are bigger than our preferred browser window size setting rather than manually dragging the window larger, then reducing it to the normal size once we've finished looking at it.

We also often find ourselves editing incorrectly entered web addresses in the address bar. If it's a long address, you might like to use Ctrl+Left Arrow or Ctrl+Right Arrow to move backwards and forwards to the logical line breaks in the address string (give it a try to see what we mean) It's much faster than using the arrow keys alone to move the cursor along one character at a time to get to the typo. There are many more shortcuts available that you can quickly learn. See right for a listing of some of the more useful ones

QUICK LINKS If you find yourself frequently visiting a website then it may be a good candidate for putting on your Link toolbar. If this bar isn't showing on the IE menu at the top then go to the View menu, select Toolbars and then make sure Links is checked. We put our favourite search engine websites such as

EXPLORER QUICK KEYS

F1	Display the help pages
Alt+Right Arrow	Same as clicking the Forward button
Alt+Left Arrow	Same as clicking the Back button
Ctrl+F	Brings up a search box to find words on the current web page
Ctrl+R (or F5)	This refreshes the web page.
ESC	Stop downloading a web page (doesn't always work).
Ctrl+N	Open a new browser window
Ctrl+W	Close the currently active window
Ctrl+S	Save the current page to disk
Ctrl+E	Opens and closes the Search window in the Explorer bar.
Ctrl+I	Opens and closes Favourites in the Explorer bar.
Ctrl+B	Opens the Organise Favourites menu
Ctrl+D	Add page to Favourites.

ESSENTIAL EXTRAS

IF YOU WANT YOUR WEB SURFING SESSION TO BE
FUN, FAST AND SAFE THEN YOU SHOULD CHECK OUT
THE FOLLOWING SELECTION OF HANDY UTILITIES.

Flash Player version 5
www.macromedia.com/software/flash/
Many companies now give you the choice of viewing either an
enhanced or standard version of their website. Enhanced
websites tend to be much more animated and better looking
because they use Flash technology from Macromedia, whereas
the other versions use standard HTML. To enjoy the animated
Flash versions, either download the player from the website
above or check out this month's CD where it can be found
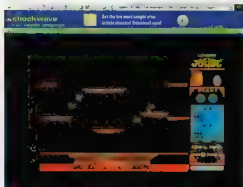
Shockwave Player version 8.5
www.macromedia.com/shockwave/
Considering you have this copy of PC GAMEPLAY in your hands,
it's a safe bet that you're an avid gamer. Well, there are some
really cool free and, more importantly, fun games on the web
that you can play using nothing but your browser. A lot of
them require Shockwave to be installed so you'll need to
either visit the official site and download it, or check out this
month's CD. Once you've downloaded it, visit **www.shock-
wave.com** to ensure that everything installed successfully
and to play a collection of fun little games, including classic
80's titles such as Pacman and Joust.

MacAfee Virus Scan version 5
www.macafee.com
You must be careful when downloading anything from a web-
site as it may contain a virus. You should be okay downloading
files from well-known companies because they should already
have checked any software they put on their websites. To be
extra safe though, grab yourself a copy of MacAfee's Virus
Scan. Not only does it watch your internet connection for
dubious ActiveX or Java website code while you're surfing, it
also has several other features including letting you check
your email, allowing you to automatically scan files when
they've finished downloading and more

Compass 2.82
www.softgauge.com
Has your list of favourite websites become an unworldly
beast? Does it take forever to scroll through the list? Well you
need to sit down and get organised. Internet Explorer's
favourites organiser feature is a little awkward to use when
you want to quickly clean up a big list. That's where Compass
comes in. Organising your list is as easy as drag & drop and it
also supports Netscape and Opera browsers. A duplicate URL
find feature allows you to clean up your list and you can even
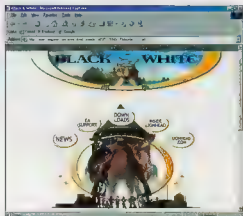add a password protection to keep everything secure.

Google, Altavista and Yahoo on the Link bar
because we use them so much. To put the
current web page into your Links list, simply
drag the icon at the start of the website name
onto the Links bar. Now it's just a simple click
away

SPACE SAVER If you are browsing in low
resolution, space may be at a premium. Why
not free up some room for a better view of
the website by trimming down the IE toolbar.
The icon bar, with the Refresh, Home and Back
buttons, shows both a picture and text. Once
you've used IE for a while you really don't
need explanatory text labels on the icons so
why not get rid of them? Go to the View
menu, select Toolbars and then Customise. At
the bottom left you'll see the text and icon
option boxes. Select No text labels in the text
option box and for even more space saving,
select Small icons. This will free up a bit of
extra space for you

SECURITY Finally, we don't need to tell you
that when you're online, there's a slight risk of
your PC being hacked. You've no doubt read
about or heard stories of Internet Explorer's
vulnerabilities, which hackers have taken
advantage of. Microsoft is quick to plug these
security holes and frequently re-releases updates
on its website. Internet Explorer has had many
revamps so you need to be sure you're current
version is the latest. Internet Explorer is
currently at version 5.5, with version 6 available
as a beta. We recommend against
downloading version 6 at this time because it
isn't the finished version and there are still
some problems with it. To make sure you're
online session is safe, go to Internet Explorer's
Tools menu and select Windows Update. From
here you can download all the patches and
updates to ensure your browser is as secure
as possible. In addition to this, try to ensure
that all websites you visit, and especially shop
from, are as safe as possible

NETPLAY review

■ Out Now ■ Price £39.99 ■ Publisher Strategy First ■ Developer Cornered Rat ■ Website: www.wwiionline.com   WORDS darren evans

WORLD WAR 2 ONLINE BLITZKRIEG

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

400MHz Pentium
128MB RAM
16MB 3D card

The above spec machine runs the 3D engine perfectly well at the default settings. However, your choice of ISP will also determine how good the game's performance will be. Any connection slower than a 56k modem is not recommended.

Has the virtual global battlefield arrived? Well not quite yet if this dissapointing game is anything to go by.

We were very excited when we first heard about this. It was the virtual battlefield come true. You could log in and essentially join the army or air force of various nations.

Choose infantry for example and you'd find yourself marching across the battlefield to enemy held towns. Or maybe you'd prefer the role of tank commander, supporting the marching infantry with some heavy gun action? If you'd rather take to the skies then the air force is for you, with classic fighters to strap into such as the Messerschmit 109E-4.

But there are annoying omissions. You'd expect to have access to decent array of weapons. Not so. All you get is a choice of rifle or machine gun. Worst of all the grenades mentioned in the manual aren't available.

The sound effects are terrible too. The box talks about unparalleled 3D sound with Doppler and directional effects. We certainly never heard these. Audio effects in warfare are vital, Operation Flashpoint does it superbly with vehicle and aircraft effects slowly increasing, as they get closer.

Don't expect to get into the warfare quickly either. This is a big team game and you have to travel relatively long distances to any kind of action. You need players as truck drivers but the poor truck driver wouldn't be able to just get out, grab a gun and join in the fun. Which

is why hardly any trucks are seen and you end up having to run for miles, which can mean running for well over seven minutes.

Worst of all are the horrific loading times. From clicking on the server name, you'll have a four-minute wait while the game loads. Once it does and you've chosen the mission, it's about a minute and half again before you're actually in the game and moving.

World War 2 Online is superb in concept but the decision to release the game prematurely was a bad one. There are various technical issues, such as the connection frequently dropping. And at $9.99 a month (you get the first month free), it's a lot to shell out for an unfinished game. One patch has already been released and more are on the way.

THE FINAL WORD It's been released far too early and as a result suffers from many technical problems. The minimum memory requirements (128MB RAM) are tough and with the horrifically long loading times, you'll find getting to the front line slow and tedious.

TANKED UP Infantry, pilot or tank commander. WW2 Online let's you play them all.

VERDICT

TECH SPEC
■ Players per CD 1
■ Maximum number of players 1000+
■ Minimum modem speed 56kb/s

OVERALL
The concept is brilliant but there's much more work to be done by the developer to bring this game up to scratch. Let's hope the patches fix things quick.

3

BOMB THE BASE The models of all the vehicles and characters in the game have detailed damage zones to simulate realistic damage during battle.

DOWN YOU GO After a jolly good hammering from the brutal wing-mounted guns of a Spitfire, another enemy plane veers out of control with flames gushing from the tail. Planes too have highly detailed damage models.

NETPLAY ›› review

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£19.99** ■ Publisher: **Empire Interactive** ■ Developer: **Empire Interactive** ■ Website: **www.empireinteractive.com**   WORDS **craig vaughan**

INTERNATIONAL CRICKET CAPTAIN
ASHES EDITION 2001

With England's Ashes dream turning into a nightmare, what better time to go online in search of an elusive home grown victory?

HOOKED AWAY The relatively easy setup procedure - register for a password and security code - enables you to be online and playing in a matter of minutes.

Although the computer opponents in this latest instalment of Empire's cricketing simulation make worthy enough opponents, there's no better feeling than pounding human foe into submission. Thankfully, the inclusion of the online league adds a whole new lease of life to the game by allowing budding captains to go head to head over the internet. Setting up matches is child's play – within moments of typing in your security code and choosing a password you'll be picking at the seam of your first ball. Thanks to the sedentary nature of the sport even gamers umbered with a standard modem will be able to compete on an even wicket with the 400 hopefuls vying for first place in the ongoing championship. Taking your best offline County side into battle, there's ample opportunity for friendly practice before tackling an all-important league match with points at stake. Throughout,

STAT'S IT! The online league lets you pit your best team against those of other cricket fans.

the server handles matters with ease, demonstrating that the sport of cricket is ideally suited to online gaming. A major hassle, though, is the frustration of ginning out a winning position only for your vanquished opponent to pull the plug at the last minute. Depriving someone of a deserved win after the best part of an hour's play is lower than sticking dirt in your pocket. Empire has already addressed this issue by naming and shaming those who suffer repeated and coincidental face-saving drop-outs, and a soon to be introduced points deduction system should ensure that the gentlemanly sport sees a return to fair play. Ashes Edition boasts a compelling online league and, the despicable antics of unworthy opponents aside, it looks set to knock what little opposition there is for six. Oh, and one last thing. last month's review quoted the asking price as £2999. Which is wrong. It's actually £1999. We stand corrected.

VERDICT

TECH SPEC
■ Players per CD 1
■ Maximum number of players 2
■ Minimum modem speed 28kb/s

OVERALL
The Ashes may be lost, but that's no reason for the cricket to stop. Running well on anything above a 28.8kb/s modem, this comes highly recommended.

6

NETPLAY ›› review

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **$9.95 monthly** ■ Publisher: **iEntertainment** ■ Developer: **iEntertainment** ■ Website: **www.iencentral.com/warbirds/index.html**   WORDS **jon brown**

WARBIRDS 3

Take to the skies for yet another stab at online global combat. Can Warbirds conquer this much-coveted battleground?
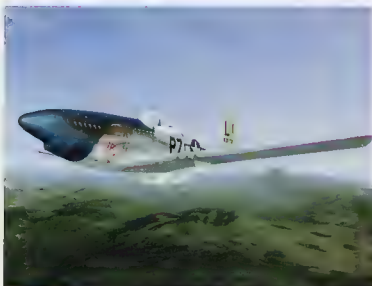
BIRD OF PREY The developer of Warbirds 3 plans to constantly evolve its product by releasing new vehicles and hosting unique online activities.

WAR IT'S AT In order to conquer an airfield first send in the bombers then deploy the paratroopers.

If you scoured our CDs and DVDs this month, you'll have come across a saliva-inducing sample of Warbirds 3, a massively multiplayer flight sim from iEntertainment. In order to get a full taste you must first set up an account, choosing from one of two payment plans. For $9.95 per month you can buy access to the demo arenas, paying a further $1.95 for every hour spent in the full arenas, while a payment of $24.95 allows you unlimited access to the entire game. In comparison to other online games, Warbirds 3 clearly isn't cheap, but with an impressive range of events scheduled, ranging from recreations of historical battles to huge blast-a-thons, it's

clear that this is one online game that won't let you down, be it in terms of technical support, free extras or hosted events.

Online battles divide the players into four nations, each of which has the ultimate goal of taking over the opponent's airfields by first destroying all buildings and then deploying paratroopers. Success in the skies will earn you medals or promotion, giving players long-term goals to aim for, and online listings are compiled to separate the Red Barons from the Richard Bransons. Casual players should be warned that Warbirds is more Microsoft Flight Sim than it is Top Gun, so if you're looking for frantic blasting action, try elsewhere.

VERDICT

TECH SPEC
■ Players per CD 1
■ Maximum number of players 100+
■ Minimum modem speed 56kb/s

OVERALL
Hardened flight sim fans should definitely give Warbirds a spin, though the cost may be prohibitive for some players. A quality multiplayer game nonetheless.

7

IT'S BEEN ANOTHER BUMPER MONTH FOR HALF-LIFE, WITH MORE QUALITY NEW RELEASES THAN YOU CAN SHAKE A CROWBAR AT. HERE'S THE CREAM OF THE CROP.

THE OPERA

■ MOD FOR: HALF-LIFE ■ THE SITE: www.opera.redeemedsoft.com

The Opera sets out to recreate the action and excitement of the Hong Kong blood opera movie genre, home of legendary directors such as John Woo. Playing as a Chinese assassin, the aim is to kill your opponents with as much style as possible points are awarded for kills made while rolling, diving or cart wheeling! The weapons on offer range from pistols to sub-machine guns, most of which can be carried 'akimbo' – one weapon in each hand. Game modes include the standard deathmatch, last man standing and the ingenious 'mookmatch', where players work together to eliminate 'mooks' – groups of stupid enemies waiting to be brutally eliminated. Superb graphics and player modes round off what will surely become a classic Half-Life modification.

VERDICT **Mods don't get much better – original and great fun.** How big: 873 MB — SCORE **9**

THE MAC DADDIES Twin Mac 10s with silencers – ideal for those awkward moments of extreme carnage

INEVITABLE BLOODBATH Close up fights can get very messy, very quickly. After a few rounds, expect the walls and floors to be plastered in blood. This violent mod is certainly not for the faint-hearted, so if blood shocks you – best stick to something else

DAY OF DEFEAT

■ MOD FOR: HALF-LIFE ■ THE SITE: www.dayofdefeatmod.com

Day of Defeat aims to bring World War 2 to Half-Life, with historically accurate weapons and plenty of attention to detail. It succeeds admirably, combining fast-moving gameplay with a superbly tense atmosphere and some of the best player models yet seen in a Half-Life modification. Games see two teams – Axis and Allies – battling over a map across a variety of different game modes, including a capture the flag variant as well as some more mission-based objectives. There are nine maps in all, featuring photo realistic textures

and plenty of wartime details – bombed houses, dark hiding places and even tanks all make an appearance. Of particular note is the Omaha beach level, where the Allies invade from the beach while the German team hold them off with mortar strikes. Day of Defeat is both historically correct and absorbing to play. Perhaps the only downer is the massive download size – nearly 100MB!

VERDICT **A high quality mod depicting the horrors of war.** How big: 98.9 MB — SCORE **8**

FOG OF WAR The balanced weather effects enhance the muddy wartime atmosphere.

HALF-REICH No realism mod is complete without a sniper rifle – Day of Defeat features two.

WIZARD WARS

■ MOD FOR: HALF-LIFE ■ THE SITE: www.planethalflife.com/wizardwars

Wizard Wars is an ambitious mod that pitches rival teams of wizards against each other in a magical realm, complete with dragons, golems and a huge arsenal of spells. Unfortunately the mod is let down by poor graphics and relatively unimpressive spell effects, although the first time you see a dragon is unforgettable. Wizard Wars can seem unbalanced, although the fantasy setting makes a refreshing change and, but for one or two flaws, this proves to be an enjoyable mod

VERDICT **Great fun overall, but let down slightly by poor graphics and slightly unbalanced spells.** How big: 38.6 MB — SCORE **7**
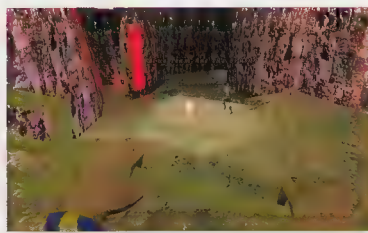
SPELLBOUND The mod is let down in places by some fairly uninspired scenery, such as this dull location, although the fantasy setting is adhered to throughout.

WAR IN EUROPE

■ MOD FOR: HALF-LIFE ■ THE SITE: www.warineuropemod.de

War in Europe, like Day of Defeat, is a Half-Life World War 2 mod concentrating on the European battle arena. Saving Private Ryan is one of the main inspirations for the mod and several of the levels bear a resemblance to parts of the film. On it's own it is a reasonable modification, but unfortunately it is severely lacking when compared to the mighty Day of Defeat. The models are of a generally poor quality and gameplay suffers from several balancing problems – not least the

terrifyingly powerful rocket launcher and the over-powered grenades. Overall, if you're after a World War 2 modification you'd be better off investing time and effort on Day of Defeat, which offers much more interesting levels, as well as more balanced gameplay.

VERDICT Has plenty of potential, with some interesting levels, but Day of Defeat does it better overall. **How big: 59.0 MB** **SCORE 6**
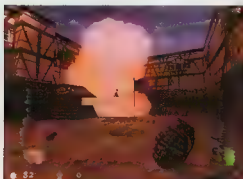
WHERE'S THE PIN Grenades have a huge blast radius and are as likely to hurt you as the enemy
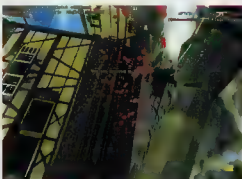
DAMN NAZI Death comes too easily in WIE – be careful or it's a trip back to the respawn point.

NICE, BUT USELESS Tanks can be found all over – unfortunately they're nothing more than scenery.

DEATHMATCH CLASSIC

■ MOD FOR: HALF-LIFE ■ THE SITE: www.valvesoftware.com

Deathmatch Classic is Valve's homage to iD software, pioneers of the first-person shooter genre. The mod is a recreation of the original QuakeWorld deathmatch, with all of the original weapons and items as well as various maps from the prototype Quake. In fact, the only indications that this 's not the Quake we know and love are the higher quality graphics and the occasional Half-Life logo where previously there was a Quake symbol – oh, and the Half-Life multiplayer models, which it has to be said do detract somewhat from the authentic Quake experience, if not from the actual gameplay. If you haven't already got this mod the chances are you'll have it soon – Valve has included it in the latest Half-Life patch (version 1 107) which will soon be a compulsory download if you wish to play Half-Life or any of its modifications online. So, whether you fancy recreating the old Quake experience or not, you will probably need to own this shortly. Still, even as a single download, at 14MB, it's of a decent size, should you be itching to get some nostalgic Quake action as soon as possible

VERDICT Old-skool Quake action for a new generation of online gamers. Nostalgic, but still great fun. **How big: 14 MB** **SCORE 8**

WONKY FACE Haven't we seen this guy somewhere before? Oh yes, it's in every first-person shooter ever released. Now experience the daddy of the genre.

PAIN KEEP ARENA

■ MOD FOR: QUAKE 3 ■ THE SITE: www.teamevolve.com/products/painkeeparena/

CHAIN REACTION The chain lightning gun arcs from one player to the next – lethal in confined spaces. Either the coolest or the most frustrating thing ever.

PainKeep was one of the most popular modifications for the original Quake, introducing a variety of exciting new additions to standard Quake deathmatch. PainKeep Arena is a brand new modification for Quake 3 that builds on the ideas of the original PainKeep while taking full advantage of the more advanced Quake 3 engine. At the heart of the mod is the amazing range of new weapons – exploding shotgun shells, a brand new nailgun and the fearsome chain-lightning gun that sends arcs of electricity between several adjacent opponents before decimating them in an explosion of giblets. There are also several more tactical weapons – beartraps can be left lying to entrap enemies, while the airfist and dragon both provide methods of quickly moving across the level. An excellent set of new maps concludes a superb variant on the standard deathmatch that utilises the Quake 3 engine to the max.

VERDICT Quake 3 deathmatch on steroids, with an abundance of enticing new features that will hook you. **How big: 48.8 MB** **SCORE 8**

EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT.

GETTING ADSL

You need an ADSL-friendly telephone exchange to get the service. Currently there are ADSL exchanges in Birmingham, Belfast, Cambridge, Cardiff, Coventry, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, London, Manchester, Milton Keynes and Newcastle. BT plans to provide further exchanges in England, moving into the home counties (Oxford and Newbury), the south coast (Brighton, Bournemouth and Hastings), the south west (Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Taunton), and expanding coverage in the North, throughout Blackburn, Carlisle, Durham, Liverpool, Warrington and York. Further rollout within the UK will extend into Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. BT should be covering half of all UK homes and businesses by now and should have 70 per cent coverage by the end of the next year. Go to www.btopenworld.com, follow the links for Open World broadband, enter your phone number and the website will tell you if the local exchange is set up for ADSL or not. Assuming the local exchange is ADSL ready and you live within three miles of it, you're ready to upgrade.
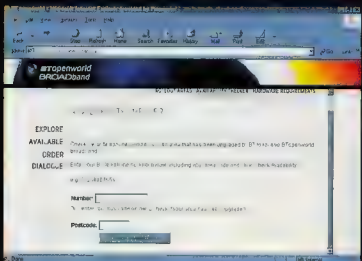
BECOMING A
Speed demon
but were afraid to ask

WORDS duncan evans

BEING THE WORLD'S BEST QUAKE 3: ARENA OR COUNTER-STRIKE PLAYER COUNTS FOR NOTHING IF YOUR ENEMY CAN SHOOT YOU BEFORE YOU'VE EVEN SEEN HIM.

The world of online gaming is great, isn't it? You can dial up and kick ass, go on quests, live in an alternative universe and make lewd remarks to complete strangers with no chance of getting a poke in the eye (well, that's what we do anyway). However, have you noticed that when you're involved in a massive Counter-Strike or Unreal Tournament (or even Quake 3 god forbid) session, there's always one person who never gets killed, who can always run through the trickiest of scenery without slowing down and who has the biggest frag count every time?

While playing a role-playing game have you ever been in the middle of a huge fight and noticed that there are gaps when everything moves and everything stops? Or been sneaking up on someone, got right behind them, opened fire and then found that you've just blown holes in the wall and the victim is behind you filling you full of lead? Of course you have, because most people in the UK use a modem to connect to the internet and modems mean lag. Yes, lag, that dark shadow that causes stout yeomen to tremble and invariably means that at the most crucial time possible your modem sends off your killer, moves to the game site then sits on its butt, twiddling its digital thumbs, while waiting for the next data packet to come back with the winning frag in it. Except that your opponent has avoided the rocket and killed you instead – you just don't know it yet.

Lag is dead time, the interval between doing something on your PC and seeing the results on screen. The more lag you get, the harder it makes the game and the choppier it looks. Instead of a frenzied gaming experience you get a slight foaming at the mouth. On bad days it's impossible to even drool and you find that you can hold conversations while playing.

The reason for lag is that your modem, bless it's straining heart, is designed to send small amounts of data back and forth. It isn't designed to slap the data for rocket jumps back and forth at high speed, nor was it ever expected to be able to download 50MB game demos either. A standard modem works at 56Kbits per second. Sometimes you'll see it written as 56Kb/s or 56K/b, which is far too close to 56k or 56Kb because this means something a lot different. Modem data rates are termed in kilobits rather than kilobytes, for exactly the same reason that Nintendo slackers refer to their cartridges as 32M/bits. It makes something that is small and pathetic sound better than it actually is.

There are 8 bits to the byte so you do the maths. That 56k/b modem has a top speed of 7k a second, but along with the data transfer the error checking is also built in. That means you get the data you want but it slows everything down. Your real world transfer rate is around 5.5k per second, and if you can actually get a 5.5k/s download then you're doing very well because conditions on the net and other users on the site also conspire to slow life down.

This is why your online gaming experience isn't the glorious blood bath it should be. But what about that shadowy figure, the one with all the frags? Why is he whipping the ass of every player in the game? Well, it might be because he's better, but it could easily be that he's got broadband access. Broadband does exactly what it says on the tin. Think of data access in terms of pipes. Your modem is a small pipe, so even when the water (that's data) is coming through at full whack, it's still restricted by the size of the pipe. Broadband is a huge pipe, the king of piping, and it's ten times the size. That means ten times the volume of water can come through compared to the modem pipe.

Okay, enough piping analogies, let's get technical. A typical configuration let's you upload at 256Kbits/s (32k/s) and download at 512Kbits/s (64k/s) – that's for home users, if you are rich then you can get business connections that offer 2Mbits/s (256k/s) connections. These speeds mean that you will be frag king because your game gets updated 5-10 times more than the other guys', every second. It doesn't mean you run at 10x the speed, just that a good player's reactions will be rewarded with instant updates. If you want to download a 50MB game demo, instead of taking two and half hours by modem (at best) it will take

FEELING BLUE There's nothing more irritating when playing fast-paced action games – like Unreal Tournament above – than being blown up before you've even seen the enemy because your connection is so slow.

EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT.

WHO TO GET IT FROM

Here are some of the people to try out. Note that all contracts are for a minimum period of 12 months and that everyone offers a 512Kbits/s download service.

SUPPLIER	BT OpenWorld	Clara.Net	Eclipse Internet	Edorf	EuropeOnLine	Freeserve
PHONE	0800 979497	020 7903 3000	01392 322334	0131 466 7003	00352 719 785	0870 400 0521
SERVICE	Home 500 (ADSL)	claraDSL.sol (ADSL)	Single User (ADSL)	Single User ADSL	Europe OnLine (satellite)	Freeserve Plus (ADSL)
WEB SITE	www.btopenworld.com	www.clara.net	www.eclipse.net.uk	www.edorf.co.uk	www.europeonline.com	www.freeserve.com
WEB SPACE	20Mb	50Mb	10Mb	25Mb	none	15Mb
TRANSFER RATE	256Kbits/s	256Kbits/s	256Kbits/s	256Kbits/s	500Kbits/s	256Kbits/s
SETUP COST	£150	£150+VAT	£150+VAT	none	dish costs	£175
MONTHLY FEE	£39.99	£49.99	£54	£71	£20	£49.99
SUPPORT	24 hours	24 hours	9am-8pm Mon-Fri 10am-5pm Sat	9am-8pm Mon-Fri 10am-4pm Sat	9am-8pm Mon-Fri 9am-6pm Sat	8am-8pm Mon-Fri 9am-5pm Sat

13 minutes by broadband. Oh yes.

There are other advantages too. For a start you get constant, 24-hour connection to the internet, there are no engaged tones when dialling up because there is no dialling up. You can host your own website – if you leave your computer on – because the connection is always there and you don't get dropped connections. Plus, people can actually ring your telephone while you are watching live webcam transmissions from Amsterdam. Surfing the net becomes a pleasure, not a pain, you can email huge files without locking your PC up for hours and videoconferencing with people on the other side of the world actually works.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW Broadband comes in three flavours: ADSL, cable and satellite. ADSL stands for Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line, which is a bit of a misnomer for a start since it uses your regular telephone line to send the data up and down. The asymmetric part comes from

the fact that the upload and download rates are different. Bear in mind that these are maximum data rates as well. Although a number of companies, including BT with BTOpenWorld (www.btopenworld.com), can offer ADSL, it is a BT company, BTIgnite, that actually does the legwork and installs the hardware. While it would be churlish to suggest that BTIgnite favours installations for BTOpenWorld it's on the record that all the other companies have complained that they don't get their installations done quickly enough.

With ADSL you get an external USB ADSL modem for your computer, a new telephone point to plug it into and the engineer also installs an ADSL routing box into the street. All good and well, but the

```
LOOKING                19
   _IDF_President
   aryanlover
   cdy882
   DeathArrow1
   DJKiwi
   DmW_PaLiDaN
   eeist
   GoD_Atlas_GG
   hjkwonk
   I2aPeI2_ThE_...
   kennyandjimbo
```

MICROSOFT'S ZONE.COM SHOWS HOW GOOD OR BAD EACH PLAYER'S CONNECTION IS. RED IS BAD, GREEN IS GOOD.

problem is that your local telephone exchange needs to have been converted to accept ADSL and for your benefit. So, you have to have a local ADSL telephone exchange and you must be within 3.5Km of it because the signal runs out of steam beyond that distance. However, there is something called the extended reach ADSL, where the access limit has been increased to 5.5Km, but your phone line needs to be tested first to make sure it's good enough.

If your local exchange is ADSL friendly then you can progress on to choosing which company to subscribe to. If it isn't, then your next choice is cable or satellite. This being BT you'd think all the exchanges would be cooking with gas but unfortunately not. BT describes the

GAMING GALORE

The games that benefit most are those that are sending large chunks of data back and forth and require the smoothest connection. First-person shooters are the classic example. If this genre is your proverbial meat and drink then ADSL and cable broadband are the choices for you. You need to be able to get your moves back upstream as fast as the action is coming back downstream. For real-time strategy games such as Red Alert 2 it might not be worth the cost since the frequency increase isn't as vital. If your main interest is in downloading stuff then you might get by with a satellite link. Here are five games that without doubt, will feel fresh and fruity after larging it in a broadband stylee.

Counter-Strike/Half-Life – all the rage of course and even better when you can shoot straight.

Star Wars Galaxies – you'll want broadband to play this Star Wars experience from the Everquest creator.

Quake 3 Arena – fast and furious rewarding those players with superfast reactions.

Tribes 2 – Loads of people flying around shooting each other, all kept in synch.

Allegiance – While not the best space game, it's the only pure online one and you can play with hundreds of people.

BECOMING A
Speed demon
but were afraid to ask

Griffin Internet	Madasafish	Nildram	NTL	Telewest	World Online	Zen Internet
0870 000 7100	0845 272 0851	0800 026 0950	0800 052 6209	0500 500100	0800 542 7898	01706 713714
Copperstream 500 (ADSL)	Dazzlefish (ADSL)	Nildram 500 (ADSL)	ntl broadband (cable)	blueyonder (cable)	Tiscali ADSL USB 500	Zen ADSL
www.griffin.net.uk	www.madasafish.com	www.getadsl.co.uk	www.ntl.com	www.blueyonder.co.uk	www.worldonline.co.uk/adsl	www.zenadsl.com
1Mb	25Mb	25Mb	10Mb	10Mb	25Mb	50Mb
250Kbit/s	256Kbits/s	256Kbits/s	128Kbits/s	128Kbits/s	256Kbits/s	256Kbits/s
£149.95 (or free)	£35+VAT	£150+VAT	£M??	£50 (+network card)	£150	£150+VAT
£49.95 (or £64.95)	£59.95+VAT	£39.99	£25	£33	£39.99	£50+VAT
9am-5pm Mon-Fri	9am-9pm Mon-Sun	8am-9pm Mon-Sun	24 hours	9am-9pm Mon-Sun	9am-9pm Mon-Sun	9am-5pm Mon-Fri

roll out of its ADSL service as aggressive. Most other people regard it as sloth-like to prop up prices. The service is patchy to say the least, but it is more widespread than cable. An old office in a converted north London garage may be ADSL ready, but a spanking new north London complex may not. Go figure.

If your luck is out on the digital telephone exchange from your next port of call is the world of cable broadband. This is offered by the major cable companies including NTL and Telewest. Fortunately it involves far less engineering work since the cable is already there. Once again you must be in an area already cabled with connection points in the street because these companies are not going to dig up the road and put in miles of cable just so you can play Quake 3. If you do live in an area that is already cabled an engineer simply turns up, fits a cable modem that connects to the existing cable box and off you go.

Once again, cable coverage is patchy and concentrated on new towns and areas around the headquarters of the cable companies. You can usually tell if a street has cable coverage by the little connection points outside each house and the perpetual self-publicity of these companies. If it is, you usually know which company is supplying it. Once you have identified the supplier, go to their website and check whether they offer cable broadband. Most do – also have a look at the table above. NTL has a list of towns it has dug up and Telewest has a little map so if you are unsure then go to their websites for a look.

Your final option, if you discover your local exchange still works by having little old ladies plug wires into routing sockets and that the cable companies consider your town to be a trailer park, is satellite access. Satellite works by having another dish in your garden that connects to a 56Kbits/s modem in your PC. It can download at the regular impressive rate of 512Kbits/s per second, and you will get a certain street cred from surfing the net via satellite, but the upload speed is limited by the modem. Yes, the 56Kbits/s modem.

Obviously, this is rubbish but if you live in the country you don't exactly get much choice. There are a couple of broadband satellite suppliers but it would save everyone the bother of having another dish on the side of the house if Sky would adopt this service. Sky's current internet service is provided through modems and the regular telephone line. Sky is testing a satellite upload and download service in Italy at the moment, but this is mainly for sending email and videos with the data coming through your Digibox and appearing on the TV.

Obviously, if successful, it can easily be extended to connecting to the PC to provide a proper internet service. This isn't going to happen this year, and probably not next year either, but we wouldn't be surprised to see Sky roll it out in 2003.

WHICH IS BEST Given the shambolic nature of broadband access you can count yourself lucky if you actually have a choice. No-one with ADSL or cable broadband should consider satellite broadband as an option at the moment. ADSL tends to have more expensive startup costs and also more expensive running costs.

The cable companies can discount their broadband service because they can also sell you TV services as well. Performance-wise, both offer exactly the same maximum up and download rates, though some cable companies offer slower services for less money. For the future, ADSL isn't going to run much faster – the limit is 2Mbits/s on copper telephone wires and that goes to the business punter. Cable uses fibre optic though and technology advances could well see the data rates increase. If you have a choice, our advice is to go for cable broadband.

THIS IS PART OF THE TELEWEST MAP OF CABLE COVERAGE IN THE UK. VISIT WWW.BLUEYONDER.CO.UK.

PC REQUIREMENTS

All these services require some kind of PC to connect to but fear not, if you are using your PC for games then it's already good enough to act as a broadband hoover, capable of sucking up as much data as you like. This is the minimum spec but the only noteworthy part is that you'll need at least Windows 98.

Pentium 200MHz
32MB RAM
16 bit sound card
4-speed CD ROM player
Graphics card capable of 800x600, 256 colours SVGA monitor
150Mb free on hard drive
Windows 98, 98SE, Me or 2000 Professional
An available USB socket

WORDS

NEW PCS TO BE FULLY XBOX COMPATIBLE?

BUYING SEPARATE 3D AND SOUND CARDS COULD BE A THING OF THE PAST IF NVIDIA'S XBOX-INSPIRED NFORCE MOTHERBOARD TAKES OFF

DESIGNED TO WORK SPECIFICALLY WITH THE 40
million AMD processors sold each year, Nvidia's
integrated nForce motherboard, also known as 'Crush',
will do away with the need to buy £200 slot-in
expansion cards in the future.

While this news will have palms sweating in the
Creative and Intel marketing departments, it's music to
the ears of PC manufacturers such as Compaq and Dell
who will build fast PCs far cheaper, without the need to
slot in Soundblaster-compatible sound cards and
Geforce-friendly 3D cards.

This sensational news means this potential mass
market PC architecture will mirror that of Microsoft's
soon-to-be-huge Xbox console, which is good news
for those of you pining over £3 piccies of Halo,
Freelancer, Amped and Munch's whacky Oddworld.

Although previous attempts at all-in-one, on-board
graphics and sound solutions, such as Intel's i810 and
i815E, meant new PCs could be bought for as little as
£600, performance on these machines is usually poor
for games because of weak 3D, average sound and
unreliable internet speeds from slow software modems.

USE THE NFORCE Nvidia's one-stop nForce solution is
different in that it includes a Geforce 2MX chip (30 per
cent faster than a Geforce MX200), DirectX 8.0
compatible Dolby 5.1 surround sound (with popular, if
rare, EAX support), super-fast memory based on its
experience designing Microsoft's Xbox console, and
high-res, full motion video-friendly internet speeds.

A dedicated 'media' chip will coordinate internet
communication and sound. Nvidia claims its design will
handle broadband internet speeds with ease. The
board will come in two flavours, one with Dolby Digital
support and one without. Clearly, the Dolby option will
be more expensive, but it will include a top-end SPDIF

connector to link up speakers for that superlative
surround sound sensation.

Most importantly, 3D gaming power will be plentiful
because of the motherboard's lightning fast memory
management. The processor and 3D card will share a
pool of RAM which is twice as fast as AMD's current
DDR memory, and a third faster than Intel's new – and
very expensive – Pentium 4-specific Ramous memory.
And on what nVidia claims will be a budget board!

Its super efficient design will make memory bottle-
necking – the blight of current PC architecture – a thing
of the past. Even today's top-end Geforce cards suffer
from bottlenecking, because their on-board memory
modules cannot keep up with demands from the
Graphics Processing Unit – GPU.

THINK QUICKLY Hardware pundits believe fast
memory is the key to photo-realistic, super-smooth
gaming, and proof of this concept can be seen with
new cards that use 128-bit RAM and data buses.

The nForce can use your existing RAM chips, such
as 100 and 133 SDRAM, but it is more likely that
manufacturers will choose newer DDR memory, running
at PC200 and PC266 speeds, because this design
crashes less frequently.

What with whispers of a tweaked Geforce 3 card
(NV25 – see Geforce 4 story on opposite page), which
will be virtually identical to Xbox's graphics chip, set to
appear in early 2002, it appears the PC is set to have
much more in common with Microsoft's console cousin
than we could have ever have hoped. One thing's for
sure: the future is certainly looking extremely bright for
PC gamers.

HARDCORE BOARDING This Nvidia card is so powerful, you
can even remove it from your PC and snowboard on it.

PC GAMEPLAY TALKS TURKEY WITH NVIDIA'S DAN VAVOLI ABOUT THE NEW XBOX-LIKE NFORCE MOTHERBOARD

PCG: What market share is Nvidia aiming for with
the nForce chipset?
DV: If I could foretell the future I'd be a rich man.
But seriously, we want to turn the nForce into the
top platform for AMD processors. AMD sells 40
million processors every year. If we could sell
chipsets for half of these CPUs, it would be a very
good achievement.

PCG: nForce is an ambitious redesign of a familiar
piece of kit. Will it look anything like the
standard motherboard?
DV: We had to develop an ingenious dual
memory controller to deal with requests from the
processor and graphics chip. This patented design
is unique. Implementing the technology into a
normal mainboard caused us problems at first,
but we finally found a way to produce the
mainboards in the low-cost four layer design.

PCG: Do you believe that there's a market for
extremely high-performance integrated chipsets
like the nForce?
DV: Yes, as we're offering a whole high-tech
bundle with the nForce. For the price of a normal
PC with an average graphics card, PC
manufacturers can now make a computer with
nForce board. It has higher-performance
architecture, better audio and faster graphics

ZIP GETS HIP

POCKET-SIZED PERIPHERAL PRODUCER IOMEGA REVEALS COMPACT VERSIONS OF ITS REMOVABLE ZIP DRIVES IN 100 AND 250MB FLAVOURS. PERFECT FOR SAVING THOSE DOWNLOADED DEMOS...

THE MUST-HAVE DESK ACCESSORY FOR trendy graphic designers is now within the reach of the humble games player, with Iomega's diminutive 100MB Zip drive resurfacing with a new look for £99.

With a new, svelte blue design, this proven storage workhorse is just the thing for big game saves.

If you need a higher capacity device, say you want to download capacious games demos on your speedy office ISDN line and

then play them at home – don't tell your boss we recommended this money-saving trick – then the larger 250MB version will be of more use. The Zip 250 USB is to retail at a still-reasonable £179.

Both of the storage drives should hit the shops this month. We'll have a more detailed look at them next month, but if they're up to Iomega's usual standards (fast, quiet data storage) then you shouldn't need our recommendation anyway.
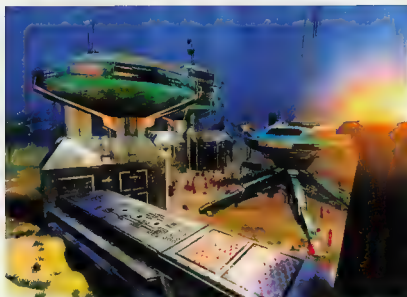

KEEP OUT OF THE SEA The drives will not, in fact, be big enough to surf on. Nor waterproof. Okay?

NVIDIA'S SWANKY NEW LABS A second vertex shader on Nvidia's new graphics card will make Xbox conversions that little bit easier. The future of PC gaming keeps getting better!

SHADER DEALINGS

RUMOURS ABOUND ON THE NET THAT WHISPERS FROM Nvidia's R&D labs tell of a powerful new graphics card based on the Xbox graphics chip. Current gossip-mongering has it that the NV25 will be a beefed up Geforce 3 (precisely what resides inside Mr Gates's new toy), with another vertex shader bolted on.

Current Geforce 3 chips possesses one vertex shader already, but the added oomph another brings means games will port from 'box to PC without a hitch, while retaining all the graphical finesse of the original.

We also suspect Geforce 4 will appear with more memory, which will run even faster than the current pant-dampening GF3. And if we're really lucky, the new card will utilise features from DirectX 8.1, just like Xbox. It all looks like further evidence that the future of PC gaming is going to be tied in with Microsoft's new black beast. All together now "Oooooooh".

NEED A FASTER MEMOR...

CALLING ALL OVERCLOCKERS TRYING TO squeeze the last few ounces of juice out of that metal box you call a games machine? How's about some new RAM that runs at 150MHz, as opposed to the oh-so-sluggish 100 or 133 stuff you've got under the bonnet at the moment. Or maybe you own a flash Pentium 4 machine? In which case you can upgrade to 300MHz DDRAM.

Absolute Multimedia is well aware of how important memory speed is and this is why its brought a new line of modules called Odin to the market.

Both the 150 SDRAM and 300 DDRAM versions are available in 128, 256 and 512MB varieties, and each claims to up speed by approximately 10-15 per cent.

Absolute Multimedia has also changed the name of its Geforce 2 card to Morpheus from Hereon. Anyone who can tell us the predominant theme running through their naming policy will win a small prize. A very small prize. (Usual email address)

ODE TO ODIN When people see this incredible watch, they will surely lap these memory modules up in their droves. Add to that, they'll get a whopping 10 to 15 per cent booster to their memory speeds.

■ HEADS UP FOR MATROX

There's been a prolonged silence since the launch of Matrox's peoples' favourite, the twin-view rig G450. But this silence has been broken with news of the imminent G550. Like its predecessor, the 550 won't pull up trees in the speed stakes, but it will continue to be the master of reliability and driver support. The areas the PC GAMEPLAY hardware boffins believe are as important as anything.

WHAT'S NEW? Technically the 550 mirrors the 450's design - ie 64MB DDR RAM - and its Dual head display capability is back with a vengeance. But it's a new trick that is turning heads - literally. The HeadCasting engine enables gamers to chat online, using detailed animated heads and a synchronised speech program to give the impression that your gaming buddy is actually tucked away on your game's interface.

VIRTUAL FRIENDS We have yet to test the idea but with flashy technology licensed from big mask and Lipsinc and knowing Matrox's impeccable record for reliability and support, this should be good fun. The new idea uses DirectX 8's vertex shading trick to create real looking heads but it's important to point out that the card will not support the very latest shader technology in games - as the Geforce 3 and Radeon 2 promise.

THE SPEC... The card will be fast enough for medium detail gaming, with claims of double speed rates in most areas. The card should make it into the shops for around £110, in a month or so. We will, of course carry a full review

NEC DV-5800

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£59** ■ Manufacturer: **NEC** ■ www.nec.com

WHETHER YOU WANT TO PLAY DVD MOVIES, OR COPY AND INSTALL FILES, THIS JUGGLES BOTH.

f you don't yet have a DVD drive – shame on you – and your old CD-Rom is showing grey hairs, NEC has a low cost alternative. This unit reads DVDs up to 48X speed, and stays quiet, even during major speed changes. A cache of 512KB is big enough to avoid stutters, and its data transfer rates of 2,085KB (CD) and 8,333KB (DVD) per second, places it mid-table when competing with other players. Unfortunately there is no software DVD player included. You will need to buy this separately or invest in a hardware decoder card.

> A middle-for-diddling drive that runs quietly while spinning movies or big games discs. The lack of software knocks it down.

6
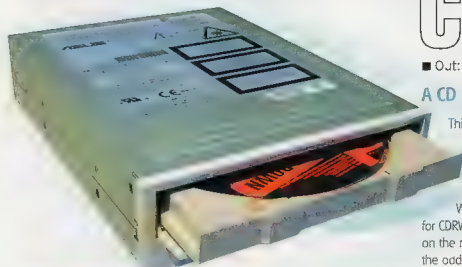
CRW 1210R

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£59** ■ Manufacturer: **Asus** ■ www.asus.com

A CD BURNER THAT PROMISES NOT TO CHEW UP BLANK DISCS.

This burner is an idea entry level mode for anyone who doesn't have such a thing in their gaming tower, or for anyone wanting to replace their old burner for a faster one. With 12X burn speed for CDRs and 10X for CDRWs it might not be one of the fastest on the market but it is adequate for making the odd backup copy. A normal CD can be duped in just over seven minutes. It uses Justlink technology to prevent blank CDs being destroyed by buffer underruns. If the data stream is broken during the burning process the drive notes the exact place it occurred and

continues from the same place once the jam is cleared. Destroyed blanks will hopefully become a thing of the past

A highlight of this package is the speed at which it can read audio CDs. An album can be ripped at 26X speed, ideal for putting your collection onto the hard drive for downloading to an mp3 player or Minidisc. The payoff for this speed is a high drive noise. Sometimes a loud humming can be heard when the unit is speeding up or slowing down. In the retail version Asus includes the Nero 5 burn program, ten blank CDs, a handbook and all the cables and screws needed to get you off the mark

> Fast and reliable, utilising the very latest software components. Perhaps a little noisy at times though.

7

NR-7700

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£109** ■ Manufacturer: **NEC** ■ www.nec.co.uk

IT'S ABOUT AS FUN AS WATCHING PAINT DRY BURNING DISCS WITH YOUR 4X DRIVE, ISN'T IT? UPGRADE IT THEN.

Latching on to your PC's motherboard via an EIDE interface, this is an ideal candidate for day-to-day burning duties. It is a smooth, quiet operator despite offering a decent 12X burn speed for CDs and 10X speed for CDRWs. Also featuring in the package is the Justlink software, as seen in the Asus bundle above, so this means far fewer spoilt discs. We were interested to see this unit boasts a CD access time of 106ms, which is very reasonable for a burner. It will mean faster access between

levels in games for starters. NEC ships two blank CDs to get you going, but at around £25 for 100 it's hardly the greatest giveaway of the century. The easy to use Easy CD Creator 4.0 is included, and will quickly guide you through the CD creation process. This is a solid and fairly rapid burner at a fair price, which may well tempt those first-time burners or people wishing to upgrade from their meddling 4X speed burner.

> Super-fast access times, on with hard drives, means faster games. Which is good for us trigger-fingered types.

7

FORTISSIMO 2

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£49** ■ Manufacturer: **Hercules** ■ www.hercules-uk.com

FOLLOWING ITS SUCCESS IN THE GRAPHICS CARD MARKET, HERCULES IS GATE-CRASHING THE SOUND PARTY AS WELL.

Two new sound cards were presented by Hercules at the Cebit hardware show in Germany, in May. The Muse XL, which features in the 3D card giants' new range, is simply a beefed up Muse but this new Fortissimo 's a genuine redesign.

It possesses the usual analogue interfaces plus optical in and out sockets for Minidisc users. The analogue interfaces are connected to the card via a cinch cable. In addition to the loudspeaker connections there is a pre-amplified headphone socket. The software package includes the usual redundant

sampling and sequencing freebies along with a more useful – if only 30-day trial – version of Power DVD 3.0. Importantly, this card is the only unit outside of Creative that supports the well-loved EAX 2.0 sound standard.

Unfortunately, it is wasted here because the quality of the sound output is well below that of the market leader – the SB 1024 Live.

5

150x

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£780** ■ Manufacturer: **Philips** ■ www.philips.com

AS STYLISH AS RIVALDO, BUT AS TEMPERAMENTAL AS ROY KEANE, THE 150X IS FAR FROM BEING THE ULTIMATE GAMES MONITOR.

Philips has set its sights on the TFT market with this elegant, if expensive model. Both beautiful and practical, this black and silver svelte object of desire has an interchangeable trim so it matches your minimalist-themed Dock and flats' décor.

There are connections options for DVI and RGB and you can hook up the screen to your PC using either analogue or digital sockets. This assumes you have an appropriate graphics card, of course. The screen, as you would hope at this price, is gin clear and sharp as a Sabatier kitchen knife. But. But, but, the back lighting is a tad splodgy and if you're using it for games, you really need a faster screen 'reaction' time than 40ms. This is why we'd recommend the 150 only for general multi-purpose use and not for the full-time games nut. A shame really, and particularly irritating because the 150x is a real looker that will brighten up your games room.

6
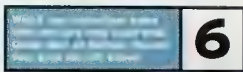
FLATRON 577LH

■ Out: **Now** ■ Price: **£560** ■ Manufacturer: **LG** ■ www.lg.com

EVERYBODY WANTS ONE. BUT CAN YOU AFFORD IT? BEST HIDE IT FROM THE MISSUS, BEFORE SHE FINDS OUT WHAT IT COSTS.

Popular budget screen melder, LG, has clearly put much effort into producing this leading edge sheet of glass. Placing USB sockets into screens and speaker is becoming common-place, but it's still nice to see four hubs ready for joypads and webcams up on the top of the desk.

The screen connects to your PC box via an RGB cable. And like most TFTs these days, the 577LH can automatically adjust phase and geometry to give the clearest image. Although

the manufacturer quotes a reaction time of 45ms (roughly 22 frames per second), we were unable to detect streaking – the blight of TFT monitors – even at 40fps. The colour brilliance and picture definition is good, if a little rough with background lighting from time to time.

8

ULTIMATE PC RIG

YOU'VE BEEN AWAY ON HOLIDAY, SPLASHING OUT ON BOOZE, WATERSKIING AND OVER-SIZED CLUBS, BUT YOU'VE RETURNED TO FIND YOU STILL HAVE A FEW QUID IN THE PIGGY BANK? WELL, WHERE BETTER TO SPEND THE REST?

3D CARD

GLADIAC 920
■ £350 ■ Elsa
■ 0207 294 0114
■ www.elsa.com
Still stupidly overpriced, even at £350, but the ultimate 3D experience is guaranteed.

Also check out

■ PROPHET 4500 ■ £129 ■ Hercules
■ 020 8686 5600 ■ www.guillemot.com

BUDGET Vivid! ■ £63
■ Videologic www.videologic.co.uk

JOYPADS

ELIMINATOR SHOCK
■ £29 ■ Gravis
■ www.gravis.com
King Eliminator's dual analogue controllers make it the ideal candidate for racing games. Use one for steering and the other for thrust.

Also check out

■ WINGMAN GAMEPAD EXTREME ■ £35 ■ Logitech
■ 020 8308 6582 ■ www.logitech.com

BUDGET SIDEWINDER GAMEPAD ■ £20
■ Microsoft www.microsoft.com

STEERING WHEELS

FERRARI FORCE FEEDBACK WHEEL
■ £85 ■ Guillemot
■ 020 8686 5600
■ www.guillemot.com
Heavy-duty wheel at a price that many can afford. It's just like driving a Ferrari. Well, we reckon at least.

Also check out

■ WINGMAN FORMULA GP ■ £49 ■ Logitech
■ 020 8308 6582 ■ www.logitech.com

BUDGET ULTIMATE PC WHEEL ■ £29
■ Destiny www.leda.co.uk

HEADPHONES

HS1
■ £49 ■ Plantronics
■ 08705 464464
■ www.plantronics.com
Light and comfortable on the head, with a wide range of sound and absolutely no bass distortion. Also ships with a mic for online communication.

Also check out

■ MDR 830 CORDLESS ■ £99 ■ Sony
■ 020 7365 2948 ■ www.sony.com

BUDGET SCREENBEAT SUPER HEADPHONES ■ £8
■ Spectravideo

GLADIAC 920

■ £350 ■ Elsa ■ 0207 294 0114 ■ www.elsa.com

THE MOORE'S LAW IN REVERSE PRICING THEORY which drives processors and 3D cards down has seen these stupidly over-priced, if eye blurringly quick, 3D units drop like stones. You will now find Geforce 3s on the street for £299, despite a new retail price of £350. It's worth noting each DirectX-8 powered Nvidia card is just about as good as the other, but we'd be tempted to go for the biggest brand if your stockist has them at the same price. We chose Elsa's last month because the company took the brave step of reducing the Geforce 3 to a more pocket friendly £350 outlay. It's also a tad faster than the competition. It's still stupendously pricey, but if you want to see Max Payne, Duke Nukem Forever, and Wolfenstein in all their mist and water-filled glory you'd better start putting in the overtime. And buy a 3D Prophet 4500 (Hercules) at £129 if you're on a budget
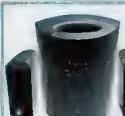
MONITORS

BRILLIANCE 107
■ £249 ■ Philips
■ 020 8689 4444
■ www.philips.com
Good quality, high-resolution visuals become so much more palatable when they become available at this extremely wallet-friendly price.

Also check out

■ VISION MASTER PRO 19 ■ £374 ■ Iiyama
■ www.iiyama.com

BUDGET S700JT1 ■ £182
■ www.iiyama.com

SPEAKERS

SOUNDMAN X2
■ £59 ■ Logitech
■ 020 8308 6582
■ www.logitech.com
Great sound range and a sassy future sub-bass woofer make this Logitech set a must-have for any self-respecting home of the future.

Also check out

■ SOUNDWORKS DT2200 ■ £99 ■ Creative
■ 01189 344744 ■ www.europe.creative.com

BUDGET SCREENBEAT SOUND STATION ■ £39
■ www.spectravideo.com

EVOLUTION 1700

■ £1,499 ■ Evesham ■ www.evesham.com

A FEW OF THE ELDER GAMING STATESMEN
on PC GAMEPLAY can remember buying their
Atari STs and Amigas from reliable UK retailer,
Evesham Micros. Traditionally a mail order
firm, you'll need £1,500 smackers to coax
this from its bulging virtual warehouse at
www.evesham.com, but for your
spondoolies you'll receive one of the fastest
Pentium 4 rigs around, alongside an Imax-
ike 19-inch Mitsubishi vdu. As the new
batch of 3D cards makes it onto the market,
we'd be tempted to swap the 64MB Geforce
MX for a 64MB Prophet 4500 if you want to
save a few quid, or go all guns blazing for a
Geforce 3, bumping the price up to around
£1,900. Slotted into the case of this PC is a
DVD-ROM drive and a CD burner, which will
create a perfect copy of any data or audio
disc in approximately ten minutes

FORTISSIMO 2

■ £49 ■ Hercules ■ www.hercules-uk.com

ALTHOUGH WE'D RECOMMEND
buying official Creative
Soundblaster merchandise
over anything else,
Hercules' new Fortissimo
card is an affordable
alternative. Its sound quality
isn't as good as Creative's
Live equivalent, but for those
with MiniDisc players its
optical in and out cables will
prove invaluable. This brand
new Fortissimo is the only
card – other than Creative's
Live – to support Creative's
useful EAX 2.0 sound standard,
fast becoming a default mode
for 3D surround effects in
games. Cheap sound cards can
create all sorts of problems, and
conflict with other devices in
your PC, so this is one area you
really shouldn't skimp on

BUYER'S GUIDE

THERE AREN'T TOO MANY GAMES CHANGING PLACES IN OUR TOP TENS THIS MONTH, BUT LOOK OUT FOR VIVENDI'S 'BEST SELLER SERIES' ON BUDGET NEXT ISSUE.

WIN!

READERS' REVIEWS
Have your say about what's hot and what's not!

Seen a review that's made your blood boil? Bought a game we recommended and been bitterly disappointed? Well, not send in your own 60-word appraisal and try to prove that we got it wrong? Or maybe you agree with us who cares? Send us your reviews by email to pcgameplay@computecmedia.co.uk. Remember, the author of each one printed wins a free game!

Tropico by Tom Williams

Undeservedly lumped alongside the big guns of Emperor Battle For Dune, Z, Steel Soldiers and Mechcommander 2, this is the sleeper hit of the year. It's rare to see a strategy game with a deliberate sense of humour, and although there are too many stats to take into account sometimes, you'll never get bored of it all. Excellent

OUR SCORE **7**   YOUR SCORE **8**

■ Take 2 interactive ■ issue 13

Alone in the Dark 4 by Georgina McVeigh

What a disappointment! Instead of being at the forefront of survival-horror games — easily knocking spots off Resssie Evil — the fourth game is merely run of the mill. Can someone please tell developers that mixing everything as black as possible doesn't make them any more frighten ng. The female character is a pointless addition and a wasted opportunity

OUR SCORE **7**   YOUR SCORE **4**

■ nfogrames ■ issue 14

Operation Flashpoint by Chris Bens
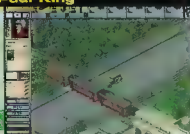
The finest game of the year No arguments What makes Op Flashpoint so special are the range of missions and the fantastic single player campaign offering realistic military manoeuvres. And just wait until the promised three upgrades arrive in the next few months. They're sure to make the poor multiplayer side of things as good as single player games.

OUR SCORE **9**   YOUR SCORE **10**

■ Codemasters ■ ssue 14

Gangsters 2 by Paul King

You were absolutely spot on with your review of this mediocre game. I actually enjoyed the first game despite all its patterns, and thought they would be ironed out for the sequel. How wrong was I, if anything they're worse this time. The artificial intelligence is the worst part of the whole game, although the fiddly controls run it a close second

OUR SCORE **6**   YOUR SCORE **6**

■ E dos Interactive ■ Issue 14

ACTION >>
GOOD ID-EA
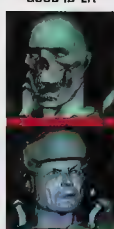
Betting has started on finding out what new game id Software is working on. The company's PR agency sent the following mysterious email to several major PC gaming websites:

NEW GAMES FROM ID SOFTWARE. QUAKECON 2001 AUG. 9 - 12 MESQUITE, TEXAS

The rumour of the email would suggest something as yet unannounced, therefore ruling out Doom 3. A next-generation Quake 4 game seems the likeliest contender, closely followed by porting an existing game to Xbox, and another add-on for Quake 3 Arena. Here at PC GAMEPLAY we'd like to see a strong single-player Quake game, but rest assured we'll bring you the details of the outcome, whatever it may be, next month

>> ACTION

1 Half-Life
Undoubtedly the finest 3D shooter ever to grace the PC. After an experiment goes wrong it's the player's task to guide scientist Gordon Freeman to freedom through an underground research complex full of very angry aliens and the military is sent to 'clean up'. It's the thrilling plot and stunning artificial intelligence that makes Half Life so successful
■ Havas interactive ■ issue n/a
SCORE 9

2 Operation Flashpoint
One minute you're picking off Commie troops from the outskirts of a village, the next you're bouncing along a dust track in a tiny jeep, escorting a general to the front line. You might even get kidnapped by guerilla forces. Far from sinking under the weight of its own ambition, Op Flash succeeds in every way.
■ Codemasters ■ Issue 14
SCORE 9

3 Hitman: Codename 47
The combination of stealth and shoot outs in Hitman works better than you could have expected, always guiding rather than pushing you into the strategy that works best. But what makes Hitman a true masterpiece is the effort that's gone into creating these unique levels. See you on the rooftops.
■ E dos Interact ve ■ issue 7
SCORE 9

4 Starlancer
To its credit, Starlancer doesn't pretend to be anything more than a pure cut-and-out blast-a-thon. Its deft blend of superbly-realised atmosphere, stunning effects-packed photorealistic visuals, sweeping orchestral soundtrack and slickly enjoyable white-knuckle action is a credit to developer Digital Anvil.
■ Microsoft ■ ssue 1
SCORE 9

5 Quake 3: Arena
It might be the top multiplayer game, but Quake 3 can't match Half-Life in single-player mode. There's no real story attached, just an excuse to hurtle around fragging anything that moves. The game is split into six bits of four arenas each, and all four must be compared to progress to the next bit A top title
■ Act vision ■ Iss e n/a
SCORE 8

6 Freespace 2
Continuing the original game's plot, Freespace 2 also matches the thoughtfully constructed missions uncomplicated gameplay and superb graphics. What really sets this apart from other similar games is the slick, exhilarating combat action with intelligent computer-controlled opponents.
■ Interplay ■ Issue n/a
SCORE 8

7 Edge of Chaos
Given the scale and grace of this epic, being critical seems churlish, but we note that the Newtonian physics model and new-fangled control system might deter some in any case, they don't come close to denting what proves to be an entertaining space opera.
■ nfogrames ■ ssue 14
SCORE 8

8 Crimson Skies
Microsoft's heresy of releasing an arcade-style plane game will send flight sim fans spinning out of control Anyone with an open mind, however, can't fail to be charmed. It's instantly playable and doesn't take itself too seriously The action never strays from being come book, and appeals more as a result.
■ M crosoft ■ Issue 6
SCORE 8

9 No One Lives Forever
Fox nteractive has managed to come up with its own answer to Eidos' Lara Croft in the curvy form of agent Cate Archer, however, we think you'll find the action in No One Lives Forever not so much a step up from that seen in the increasingly dreary Tomb Raider titles, more like a flight of stairs.
■ Fox Interact ve ■ ssue 6
SCORE 8

10 American McGee's Alice
Expect superbly designed levels, a weird and weird story with creepy and sometimes disturbing visuals Throw in an equally spooky soundtrack created by Chris Vrenna of Nine Inch Nails fame and you have all the ingredients for a gaming treat Mr McGee and his pals at Rogue have done a marvellous job.
■ Electronic Arts ■ Issue 9
SCORE 8

See this month's CD and DVD for more in-depth reviews of our favourite games

>> ADVENTURE & RPG

1 Deus Ex

Although a blend of diverse genres, the balance in Deus Ex is delicious. Role-playing game elements breathe hitherto unattainable variety into the action and turn what could have been a run-of-the-mill 3D shooter into a masterpiece. The wide-open nature of the missions means that going forward mixes superbly with gung-ho action.

■ Eidos Interactive ■ Issue 4

SCORE 9

2 Baldur's Gate 2: Throne of Bhaal

A superb final outing of possibly the best ever fantasy RPG. How does Black Isle pump out games of this quality with such ease and regularity, while maintaining high standards with the story, detail and playability? As expansion packs go, this is a great example of how they should be done.

■ Interplay ■ Issue 14

SCORE 9

3 Diablo 2

Just like its predecessor, this ambitious project successfully lands smack in the middle of two disparate breeds of gamer. For the RPG fan there's the fun of creating a character and improving its skills and abilities. And for the action crowd, there's no small amount of fast and frantic combat.

■ Blizzard ■ Issue 3

SCORE 9

4 Final Fantasy 8

Famed Japanese developer Squaresoft's Final Fantasy 8 will keep any gamer occupied for months simply because there are endless possibilities to modify and improve your character. Combat is again turn-based, and experience points and levels are gained. Crudely ported, perhaps, but also immersive.

■ Eidos Interactive ■ Issue 4

SCORE 9

5 Anachronox

A Japanese console-style RPG that happily sits on the PC with the best D&D has to offer. Detailed and likeable characters, logical and satisfying puzzles and a delicate cocktail of genres and mini-games adds up to far more than the sum of its parts. Anachronox has real soul.

■ Eidos Interactive ■ Issue 14

SCORE 8

6 Resident Evil 3: Nemesis

Gamers looking for something new in a tried and tested formula may well be disappointed. That said, the graphics have finally been reworked to PC standard, the play area is massive and the baddie unnerving – the puzzles prove to be nothing more than a minor distraction while you reload your guns.

■ Eidos Interactive ■ Issue 5

SCORE 8

7 Icewind Dale

A solid RPG that brings a slightly new slant to the excellent series of RPGs Black Isle has released over the last year or so. Cosmetically, the Infinity engine does the job without being stunning, but in RPGs graphics play second fiddle to the playability and this is where Icewind Dale excels.

■ Eidos Interactive ■ Issue n/a

SCORE 8

8 Stupid Invaders

This is one of those rare games which will appeal to everyone. Kids will love the rude parts and the draw of essentially viewing a cartoon, but like The Simpsons and South Park these toons are those made primarily for an older generation. Easily as funny as the third Monkey Island ark.

■ Ubi Soft ■ Issue 6

SCORE 8

9 Severance: Blade of Darkness

With its superb combat and strong engine, there's more to Severance than mindless gore. Seasoned dice merchants may find it shallow and at times rather vapid, but those of us without beards will welcome it as an accessible, user-friendly RPG. Suffers from being released in the same period as Rune.

■ Codemasters ■ Issue 10

SCORE 7

10 Escape From Monkey Island

In the Monkey Island canon this falls just short of the first two adventures. The 3D update actually adds something to the game and brings characters and environments to life, but the overly-wordy dialogue and limp post modern jokes don't always work so well.

■ Activis ■ Issue 8

SCORE 7

<< ADVENTURE & RPG

B-MOVIE MOVES

More details are emerging about the Resident Evil movie, although it still without a confirmed release date... Despite rumours to the contrary, Angel's David Boreanaz does not star in the film, but Milla Jovovich, Michelle Rodriguez and Eric Mabius are cast as Alice, Rain, and Matt respectively. The story, already a prequel to the games, concerns an out-of-control supercomputer that is involved in a lab accident in which hundreds of scientists mutate into zombies. Okay, so the plot stinks worse than rotting flesh, but it's an excuse for true survival-horror scenarios, including a fight with a zombie dog! And Jovovich looks great in that costume.

ADVENTURE & RPG
BUDGET RANGE

1. System Shock 2
■ Electronic Arts ■ Issue: N/A
On a faster than light starship, you wake from cryogenic sleep to discover your crewmates have been infected with a parasite. Add to that fun factor in the mutant corpses, Shodan from Flying out and you know it's going to be a bad idea.

9

2. Baldur's Gate
■ Interplay ■ Issue: N/A
A huge classic style role-playing game based on the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons rule-type game and offering much to an avid RPG fan. Superb introduction to the immersive genre and add on Throne of Bhaal Shame on you if you don't own it.

9

3. Grim Fandango
■ LucasArts ■ Issue: N/A
Grim Fandango is a captivating adventure. Taking control of Manuel 'Manny' Calavera, you'll do what you must to ensure he recently deceased get a time-bonus. Travel service out as years when investigating a most neutral map.

9

4. Planescape Torment
■ Interplay ■ Issue: N/A
Using the Baldur's Gate engine to greater effect, Planescape Torment is a painful and engrossing. Few minor set a microstate stat with little except you only use the Torment. So there's no telling any good of discovering your afterlife and significance.

8

5. Outcast
■ Infogrames ■ Issue: N/A
Sometimes games become credit for failing to break new ground. Outcast is such a genre. Some years ago this are flawed because they are over-ambitious. Here it is also such a game. The finest definition you can find of a love/hate relationship.

8

>> DRIVING

1 Colin McRae Rally 2

Colin McRae 2 is a tense, thrill-ride of a racer that will suck you in on the day you buy it and spit you out three months later when you've beaten your best time on every track ten times over. Crucially, no other game captures the spirit of its subject matter so convincingly and petrol-heads need not leave the house to ease their heart rates ever again.

■ Codemasters ■ Issue 8

SCORE 10

2 Grand Prix 3

GP3 isn't so much breathtaking as lung-suckingly vacutastic and is truly one of the greatest racing games to grace the PC. Maybe the presentation could have been touched up a little, and to run it on high detail needs a pretty nippy machine. Force-feedback owners are in for udder realism.

■ Hasbro Interactive ■ Issue 4

SCORE 9

3 Midtown Madness 2 & Motocross Madness 2

A double-pack featuring the most thrilling fun possible on two and four wheels. Midtown has fierce combats against the clock and smart opponents in two expansive, well-known cities, while Motocross boasts sublime sound and graphics and an ongoing league-based mode. Miss these games at your peril.

■ Microsoft ■ Issue n/a

SCORE 8

4 F1 World Grand Prix

Developer Lankhor has channelled much of its energy into optimising speed and polishing those car models, so the game looks truly phenomenal. When combined with the new undulating courses and realistically-modelled cars, it definitely makes for a more believable drive.

■ Eidos Interactive ■ Issue 1

SCORE 8

5 Superbike 2001

With the sports popularity increasing, Electronic Arts has used the acquisition of the official 2000 SBK World Championship licence as an excuse for another update to its franchise. Superbike 2001 is one of the finest track-based bike simulations available for the PC, demanding bags of patience.

■ Electronic Arts ■ Issue 6

SCORE 8

6 Motocross Mania

A surprisingly enjoyable racer that, were it not for the eminence of Motocross Madness 2, would undoubtedly be the best motorcycle title around. Breathtaking courses, nice handling and user-friendly physics make MM a recommendable purchase for any thrill-speaking petrol head not 'into proper' sims.

■ Take 2 Interactive ■ Issue 8

SCORE 7

7 Carmageddon TDR 2000

If you're after a new-season blood fest then Carmageddon TDR 2000 is the game for you. It's certainly got gross market appeal, containing the obligatory violence and over the top extravaganza of the first two games in the series. The missions now provide something other than zombie bashing.

■ SCI ■ Issue 1

SCORE 7

8 F1 Championship Season 2000

Besides the updated data, you can't help the feeling when playing F1 Season 2000 that many of the new features could have been incorporated into the previous edition. Cynicism aside it's still a great racer, and plays better as a result of EA policy to simplify rather than complicate.

■ Electronic Arts ■ Issue 8

SCORE 8

9 E-Racer

Offers the simplest and most addictive online racing experience around. If as online games were as effective as this, the world would be a better place, just much quieter and a lot less productive. A multiplayer name out of ten. But definitely not one for the solo gamer.

■ Rage Software ■ Issue 13

SCORE 8

10 Screamer 4X4

There is an awful lot here to recommend in what is far from a 'pick up and throw away' game. Puissance and panning are both rewarded with extra vehicles and courses. The biggest hook though, is battling the forces of nature – a challenge that never tires.

■ Virgin Interactive ■ Issue 8

SCORE 7

>> PUZZLES & PASTIMES

1 Chessmaster 7000

This, the latest in the Chessmaster series, could give Kasparov a run for his money. Fans of this most cerebral of pastimes reckon this is the definitive title for true clock-watchers of any calibre. Its major selling point, if not already obvious, is the fact that the computer-controlled opponent can be set to whatever level of greatness you desire

■ Mattel Interactive ■ Issue n/a

SCORE 8

2 Lemmings Revolution

This time, the spin is that you view the action from revolvable circular towers – the 'revolution' of the title. It's unclear what makes this a classic of the genre. Could it be the catchy music, the cartoon graphics, the sheer simplicity of the concept. Or is it just the utter stupidity these fluffy little fellas exhibit?

■ Take 2 Interactive ■ Issue 2

SCORE 8

3 Creatures 3

Creatures 3 is the latest in a long line of cyberpet style games that encourage players to breed and train cute 'artificial' life creatures called Norns. The Norns start out as eggs, and once they hatch it's up to the player to take the baby Norns by the hand and encourage them to learn and mature

■ Mattel Interactive ■ Issue n/a

SCORE 7

4 Who Wants To Be A Millionaire

A spot-on conversion of a deservedly popular TV quiz. It won't feature regularly on your play list, but will always be your first port of call for special occasions. Undoubtedly at its best as a party game, it easily captures the tension of the nail-chewing show, and you, don't have to look at Chris Tarrant

■ Eidos Interactive ■ Issue 6

SCORE 7

5 Star Wars: Pit Droids

One of the better games to come out of Episode One is this addictive kids puzzler. The objective is to guide Watoos on droids through mazes and puzzles on Tatooine. There are over 300 of the mind-bending blighters, and you can create your own puzzles and exchange them online with pals

■ LucasArts ■ Issue n/a

SCORE 6

WIN! TOP TEN VILLIANS

These are our top ten favourite nasties in the whole PC gaming empire.

❶	**LeChuck** Monkey Island 1-4	❻	**Kane** Command & Conquer series
❷	**Shodan** System Shock 1 & 2	❼	**The Skaarj** Unreal
❸	**Headcrab** Half-Life	❽	**Clovis** Blade Runner
❹	**Diablo** Diablo 1 & 2	❾	**Ultimecia** Final Fantasy 8
❺	**Jerec** Jedi Knight: Dark Forces 2	❿	**The Kilrathi** Wing Commander 1-4

Now it's your go! If you have a top ten for anything to do with PC games, send it in to the usual address and bag yourself a free game!

A recent screenshot from the Championship Manager 01/02 update sparked a flurry of postings on the official message boards at www.sigames.com. The picture, now removed, was a news piece on Millwall player Neil Harris, with info on his cancer treatment – an ordeal he's facing bravely. Managing director, Miles Jacobson, claimed: "The worst thing that we could have done in this case is buried our heads in the sand... It is very important to us that we promote the fact that cancer can happen to ANYONE at ANYTIME... Testicular cancer is most common among young men. Championship Manager is most popular among young men. If we can get just ONE person to chuck themselves that wouldn't normally do so because of the game, then that is a good thing. In the game, he recovers fully; as we are all sure that he will in real life." As ever, we'd be interested to hear your thoughts on this matter.

1. Chessmaster 6000
■ Mindscape ■ Issue: N/A
The chess engine pumping at the heart of this offering is an infinitely powerful tool allowing the less able to battle and whether you're unsure about how to play a white square 'is too' vexed is far beyond our ken. On the PC this caters for all

7

2. Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey
■ Empire Interactive ■ Issue N/A
The table is modelled perfectly in the highest resolutions known to man, down to every nook and pull, and flashing light. You can still enjoy a sublime experience made cool breaks the table's inner array

7

3. Pro Pinball: Big Race USA
■ Empire Interactive ■ Issue: N/A
As with previous incarnations of Empire's Pro Pinball, Big Race USA offers an amazingly high visual and 2D pinball table with some top physics and more options and features covered only in what you could possibly believe

7

4. Lemmings
■ Psygnosis ■ Issue: N/A
The basic idea is to get a bunch of dim lemmings safely from 'point A' to point B. Rivers must be bridged, mountains must be tunnelled and it's all surprise... a basic, so complete each map, just point A, and prove you'll be hooked

7

5. Puzzle Bobble 4
■ Virgin Interactive ■ Issue: N/A
The puzzle pastime concept is simple yet effective: fire bubbles up the screen, provide the bubbles' aim to match up patterns and colours with other bubbles. When a colour and the bubbles disappear, you win, but if you don't again

7

>> SPORT

1 Championship Manager 00/01 Ⓜ

For the huge number of hours you'll spend glued to this game, it's definitely worth shelling out the money for minor modifications. The database is as meticulous as ever, matches are exciting without resorting to a 3D engine, and all the bug new charts and stats add to the overall sense of completeness. Likely to be overtaken soon

■ Eidos Interactive ■ Issue 7

SCORE 9

2 Links LS 2000

Updating golf games must be a difficult job if Links LS 2000 is anything to go by. Football data is easy, but golf statistics? For your money you do get five new courses, 12 different golfers, two new commentators, and five new modes of play. Newcomers will definitely find a refreshing

■ Microsoft ■ Issue 8

SCORE 8

3 Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

The high quality visuals and online options make the PC version of THPS2 the best around. If there is a weakness, it's the controls, which admittedly take a fair bit of getting used to, but with hundreds of stunts and eight massive levels, there's more than enough to reward patient players

■ Activision ■ Issue 8

SCORE 8

4 Euro 2000

Euro 2000 is an absolute corker, even though it's essentially the FIFA series with a different licence. Displaying exquisite skills and putting together intricate moves that professionals only dream about is a joy to behold. Replaying them from multiple camera angles is very Roy of the Rovers stuff

■ Electronic Arts ■ Issue 2

SCORE 8

5 NHL 2001

NHL 2001 is the most comprehensive hockey game on the market, with thousands of up-to-the-minute player stats, team jerseys and tactical options. The improved Career mode guarantees hockey fans a sizeable challenge, as does the prospect of an on-line league. Surprisingly not just for puck fans

■ Electronic Arts ■ Issue 7

SCORE 7

6 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001

Tiger Woods 2001 is both simple to control and suitably complex. The only major problems are the lack of any European golfers, the slightly unconvincing ball physics and a suffocating lack of atmosphere. There also probably isn't enough to meet owning both modes, so get this instead of the 2000 version

■ Electronic Arts ■ Issue 9

SCORE 7

7 FIFA 2001

Though it is undoubtedly superior to the lacklustre PS2 port, in comparison to NHL 2001, which features an impressive list of variables that allow you to dictate the nature of the game. FIFA's three dull levels look faintly like any great football simulation just lacking the comprehensive edge of its American cousins

■ Electronic Arts ■ Issue 7

SCORE 7

8 Rugby 2001

Despite the popularity of the sport few rugby games are ever released, largely because the complicated rules and the various facets of the game make a simulation hard to create. So full marks to Creative Assembly for giving it a bash and producing a thoroughly playable and appropriately pacy game

■ Electronic Arts ■ Issue 5

SCORE 7

9 World Championship Snooker

Despite contrary claims, this marks more into a better player as its more arcade-y than a proper simulation. After a few hours of solid play you'll rack up breaks of 70 points plus and be capable of beating top seeds. You won't be sent snooker crazy, but no club player should miss it

■ Codemasters ■ Issue 10

SCORE 7

10 Madden 2001

Another Madden American Football game rolls off the conveyor belt with yet more minor tweaks to the graphics and gameplay. Essentially this means the 3D player models are better than before, the artificial intelligence has been improved, and Electronic Arts are asking £30+. Ho hum

■ Electronic Arts ■ Issue 8

SCORE 7

See this month's CD and DVD for more in-depth reviews of our favourite games

>> SIMULATION

1 Flight Unlimited 3

The Flight Unlimited series was a looker from the outset and number three continues to champion a pretty face over personality. Its hardcore, but an excellent flight training school joins the proven formula of fun flying machines and hyper-realistic scenery. With not a sidewinder in sight, visual splendour is key – if you can spare the 1GB install.

■ Electronic Arts ■ Issue 9   **SCORE 9**

2 Flight Simulator 2000

Uncle Bill's 2000 version comes in two flavours, Standard and Professional, the latter of which provides two more aircraft to fly along with half-a-dozen more highly detailed cities to soar through. Sim freaks can take to the perfectly modelled cockpit of the Boeing 777 and Concorde, and fly through 12 new cities.

■ Microsoft ■ Issue n/a   **SCORE 9**

3 Falcon 4.0

Glitches and inexcusable patch updates aside this is the definitive combat flight sim, with unsurpassed detail from fluffy cloud to scud-marked tarmac. A step-by-step tutorial is virtually taken for granted by today's discerning gamers, and here it proves invaluable in helping newcomers wrestle with the combat scenarios.

■ MicroProse ■ Issue n/a   **SCORE 9**

4 B17 Flying Fortress:The Mighty Eighth

Improved visuals and the chameleon-like nature of the gameplay mean this shouldn't only find favour with those who relish dogfighting. The major attraction is its gameplay flexibility – you can sit through an entire mission as a trigger happy tail gunner, or you can don the pilot's waxed moustache.

■ Hasbro Interactive ■ Issue 8   **SCORE 8**

6 Combat Flight Simulator 2

An excellent flight mode, tons of different planes to fly, some really challenging and involved campaigns, aesthetically pleasing, a decent suite of multiplayer options and an excellent mission editor back it all up. The novice to flight sims might find it too involving, but for the less hardcore fan these are minor setbacks.

■ Microsoft ■ Issue 8   **SCORE 8**

6 Train Simulator   **N**

A superb simulation and certain to satisfy the trainspotting fraternity for years to come. But those with anything less than a wanton lust for some locomotive lovin' could be warned that Train Simulator isn't a superb game, it's a unique experience with a limited amount of enjoyment.

■ Microsoft ■ Issue 15   **SCORE 7**

7 KA-52 Team Alligator

Graphically, this game is an absolute visual treat especially with one of today's leading 3D cards. The undulating terrain is amazingly detailed and as you cruise along at 200mph just 200ft from the ground you get a breathtaking sense of speed. And the game also plays as well as it looks.

■ GT Interactive ■ Issue n/a   **SCORE 7**

8 Flanker 2.0

Fly the long-range fighter known as the Su-27 Flanker in a campaign featuring Russia against the Ukraine. Tough, detailed, realistic, exceedingly pretty and a massive improvement on the dated original this is a sim which is hardcore flight simulation and definitely not one for casual flight buffs.

■ Mindscape ■ Issue n/a   **SCORE 7**

9 Eurofighter Typhoon

Although not the most comprehensive flight sim, Eurofighter Typhoon wins through on the ease of its pick up and play qualities. If you fancy a bash at piloting a neglected plane in an often American-based genre, you'll love the action based aspects of aviation.

■ Rage Software ■ Issue 14   **SCORE 7**

10 Panzer Elite

Another WW2 tank simulation might not sound very appetising, but Panzer Elite is up there with Armored Fist 3. The artificial intelligence is spot and nicely detailed and also strategically useful. Okay, so you can only play as the Yanks or Germans from 1942-1944, but it grabs you from the start.

■ Psygnosis ■ Issue n/a   **SCORE 7**

SIMULATION
BUDGET RANGE

1. Enemy Engaged: CvsH
■ Empire Interactive ■ Issue 1
Incredible - this is the only word to describe the EE Comanche-Hokum realistic flight environment. Slick graphics and terrific action with explosive and change. Prepare to. This offers players a complete picture of the action that invisibly affect fleets.   **9**

2. F-22 Total Air War
■ Infogrames ■ Issue N/A
A unique aspect sees the battle rage on as you take part in a chosen mission, with the outcome of each battle affecting the progress of the whole campaign in real time.   **8**

3. Flight Unlimited 2
■ Eidos Interactive ■ Issue N/A
The FU series continues the tradition in the simulation of flight and aeronautical airmanship. You will find a reason to step outside and take it easy for the hundreds of difficult aspects of the part course. Gracefully unmissable. But perseverance will find its success.   **8**

4. Battle of Britain
■ Empire Interactive ■ Issue 9
A superbly immersive game and flight sim in one, with enough tactical air and playing power. Its flurry joins as well fashioned will give you a real-time-edition-o a propeller-headed everywhere.   **8**

5. Gunship!
■ Hasbro Interactive ■ Issue 1
The graphics are excellent and give a highly detailed terrain of flight over. The flight model is quite accurate of a vehicle it's just got to grips with virtually, but for the less hardcore fan these are minor gripes.   **8**

>> STRATEGY

1 Black & White   **F**

There is so much amazing stuff in this game we honestly can't do it justice here: the creatures, the massively powerful zoom function, the interface-less hand, the gesture recognition system, the tactile inducing force-feedback, that catchy sea-shanty song. Its all too much to handle. Aaaaaaaaaaaarrrrgghh !!!

■ EA ■ Issue 20   **SCORE 10**

2 Age of Empires 2: The Conquerors (add-on)

Although Conquerors can be jumped straight into there are a few changes from Age Of Empires 2 that affect the way the game plays. The culmination of the minor gameplay tweaks and new campaigns is a superb expansion pack. Not a new direction, just lots more campaigns, units and maps.

■ Microsoft ■ Issue 5   **SCORE 9**

3 Earth 2150

Earth 2150 might not boast a host of original features, but who cares when the end result is of such sublime quality? This is a great example of why the real time strategy genre remains the most popular. The wonderful 3D graphics, the depth of gameplay and the enormity of the challenge are admirable.

■ Mattel Interactive ■ Issue 1   **SCORE 9**

4 Startopia

The more you play, the more things you find that we have your jaw aching on your chest. The game is involving, but you won't be able to help yourself from grabbing bystanders so they can see the amazing things on screen. A compulsive, incredibly versatile and well-balanced gaming experience.

■ Eidos Interactive ■ Issue 13   **SCORE 9**

5 Zeus

Impressions Games has finally cracked the strategy city building code and recognised that you can take civilisation construction seriously and still have enormous fun at the same time. You'll swiftly find yourself immersed in the centuries of tug-of-love-and-war as it's so easy to access.

■ Havas Interactive ■ Issue 7   **SCORE 9**

6 Sacrifice

Shiny needed to pull one out of the bag to lift its reputation after the disappointingly average Messiah and it has. Sacrifice's balanced blend of strategy and mobile action, when combined with bags otherworldly looks and arcade-like graphical effects, succeeds in conjuring a magical mystical tour.

■ Interplay ■ Issue 7   **SCORE 8**

7 MechCommander 2   **N**

A polished, playable and challenging game. For those who feel jaded with the countless similar RTS games let this compelling game re-ignite your enthusiasm for the genre. It's compulsive stuff and manages to keep you coming back – an elusive quality in this highly competitive and overcrowded genre.

■ Microsoft ■ Issue 15   **SCORE 8**

8 Desperados

Gaming of this type is something of an acquired taste and, as such, Desperados will either be the most frustrating or the most rewarding ride you've played this year. Finally a game that fully lives up to the hype, it won't let down those who seriously invest.

■ Infogrames ■ Issue 12   **SCORE 8**

9 Theme Park Inc.

In depth without ever being as nastaking, challenging yet never taxing, the highest recommendation we can offer is Bullfrog's latest is fun in the extreme. Like all good thrill rides, Theme Park Inc. will have you eagerly queuing for more before your feet have even touched the ground.

■ Electronic Arts ■ Issue 9   **SCORE 8**

10 Call to Power 2

Civilization fans are a demanding bunch and they know exactly what they expect from the series. There have been vast improvements in the user interface and the enemy AI, making the game more accessible, but noticeably harder to beat. May well surpass the sales achievements of its rivals.

■ Activision ■ Issue 7   **SCORE 8**

IS LARA FIRING

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JIMMY WHITE'S

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■ THEME PARK INC.	■ COLIN McCRAE RALLY
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■ WORMS WORLD PARTY	■ MIDTOWN MADNESS 2
■ AMERICAN MCGEE'S ALICE	■ QUAKE 3: TEAM ARENA

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■ GRAND PRIX 3 SEASON 2000	■ BATTLE ISLE: ANDOSIA WAR
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■ THE MOON PROJECT	■ TOMB RAIDER: CHRONICLES
■ EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE	■ GUNMAN: CHRONICLES

ISSUE # 11	ON THE CD/DVD
■ UNREAL 2	■ AOE2 CAMPAIGNS (PART 1)
■ BLACK & WHITE	■ THE MOON PROJECT
■ CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING	■ STAR WARS: NABOO FIGHTER
■ COMMANDOS 2	■ GIANTS

ISSUE # 12	ON THE CD/DVD
■ CIVILIZATION 3	■ AOE2 CAMPAIGNS (PART 2)
■ DUNGEON SIEGE	■ DESPERADOS
■ WARCRAFT 3	■ FATE OF THE DRAGON
■ TRIBES 2	■ NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

ISSUE # 13	ON THE CD/DVD
■ AGE OF MYTHOLOGY	■ TECHNOMAGE
■ THE SIMS ONLINE	■ CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING
■ SID MEIRE'S SIMGOLF	■ OFFROAD
■ STARTOPIA	■ SUMMONER

ISSUE # 14	ON THE CD/DVD
■ MAX PAYNE	■ E3 VIDEO DEMO
■ Z: STEEL SOLDIERS	■ Z: STEEL SOLDIERS
■ HALF-LIFE: BLUE SHIFT	■ TROPICO
■ SUDDEN STRIKE FOREVER	■ STARTOPIA

ISSUE # 15	ON THE CD/DVD
■ MECHCOMMANDER 2	■ LEGENDS OF MIGHT & MAGIC
■ WARCRAFT 3	■ GANGSTERS 2
■ BATTLE REALMS	■ BEACH HEAD 2000
■ GHOST RECON	■ LEADFOOT

NOTE - ISSUES 5 AND 6 ARE NOW SOLD OUT. SO BEST SNAP UP YOUR OTHER BACK ISSUES SOON BEFORE THEY BECOME UNAVAILABLE AS WELL!

CD CONTENTS

Prepare for a battle royale as the giant battlemechs return to the front line in our exclusive playable demo!

DEMO OF THE MONTH

EXCLUSIVE

MECHCOMMANDER 2

Those battlemechs are back, and this time they mean business. Prepare yourself for wholesale giant walking war-machine action!

Everyone likes giant robot war machines, and here's your chance to command armies of them in this spectacular real-time strategy sequel from Microsoft.

This exclusive demo will quickly get you into the action with an introductory single player campaign. Afterwards you can take your mechs into the real heat with multiplayer elimination games over the internet or a LAN. You get to equip your mechs and choose your pilots as they progress and improve through combat experience. So get out there: Collect medals! Salvage hardware! Blow stuff up!

CONTROLS:

Mouse	Select units and targets
Cursors	Move camera

(See hotkeys option in game for specialist keys)

MECH IT COUNT Giant walking battle platforms – that's what real-time strategy is all about!

MINIMUM SPEC 266MHz Pentium 2 64MB RAM

WALL OF FIRE This awesome playable demo introduces you to the single player campaign. Once familiar with how it plays, you can go online against some friends.

FULL METAL JACKET Each of the dozens of battlemechs in the game is stunningly crafted in 3D. The camera can be rotated for the best view.

NEED A HAND?

YOU'RE UNLIKELY TO FIND ANY PROBLEMS USING OUR HIGHLY-TESTED CD-ROMS, BUT IF YOU DO HERE ARE SOME TIPS...

RUNNING THE CD-ROM
If you have autorun activated, the CD-ROM should run as soon as you put it in your drive. If it fails to do so, you can run it manually by double-clicking on your CD-ROM drive icon. Alternatively, right click on your drive icon, select EXPLORE from the menu that appears and then double click on the START exe file. The CD will now run.

GETTING AROUND
Along the top of the screen are several red buttons – these are links to the different sections of the CD-ROM. These links remain at the top of the screen at all times, ensuring that anywhere is never more than a couple of clicks away.

CHOOSING MENUS
When you click on one of the section buttons at the top of the screen, a menu bar appears down the right side of the screen. Click on the game, patch or utility that you're interested in and the relevant information will appear on screen.

INSTALLING ITEMS
When you've found a patch, utility or demo that you wish to install, click on the dark red install button located right at the bottom of the screen. This will take you to a separate install screen (the Install Centre) where you'll find the minimum spec listed together with any other relevant information. If you are

unsure about the specifications of your machine, click on the 'System Checker' button on the main menu at the top of the screen. This will automatically tell you the speed of your processor, how much RAM you have and the name of your 3D graphics accelerator. Once you're happy that the program will work, click on the install icon that can be found in the bottom-right corner of the Install Centre.

QUIT
When you are finished exploring the CD-ROM and want to quit out of the program simply click on the cross in the top right hand corner of the screen. You will now be returned to your desktop.

HEY, I CAN'T SEE!

Maybe you're running the CD-ROMs in 640x480 resolution...

The PC GAMEPLAY CD-ROMs are optimised for use on PCs with Windows 95/98, running in a screen resolution of 800x600 (or higher) with 16-bit colour. When running in 640x480 resolution some of the pictures and text will not be visible. If you are unsure what resolution you are using or what to change your resolution to, follow these simple steps:

1. Right-click anywhere on your desktop, then select Properties at the bottom of the menu that pops up.

2. Now select the Settings tab. In the bottom-right of the screen you'll see a slider called Screen Area; move this left or right to the resolution you desire.

3. To change colour depth, click on the Colours tab next to the Screen Area tab. To view the CD-ROMs at their best, select 'High Colour (16-bit)'.
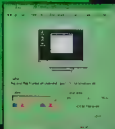
STILL GOT PROBLEMS? If you're still having problems after following the advice, call this hotline number for help: **020 8515 0400**

FIFA fights back with its latest update, plus a Colin McRae challenger and the mental Clusterball!

FIFA 2002

Filmed earlier this year, at the E3 show in Los Angeles, this is your chance to see what EA Sports has been up to. This will give you the low-down on what to expect from its new Open Passing System, as well as the new tackling and referee model. Not to mention the new line ups for 2002 and the World Cup 2002 Qualification Mode. Proof that FIFA isn't over yet!

GIVE HER A QUICK ONE-TWO The new passing rules make tactics more important.

SCORE DRAW With all the official stats for 2002 it's sure to be a hit. Again.

RALLY TROPHY

If you have nostalgic memories of beautiful old cars, tearing around, then you need to see what this beautiful game has to offer. No computer navigation and no helpful features, just the driver's skills and the open road. The way nature intended! And if you want to beat this one, you'd better be good, because the damage model will punish you severely with reductions in your car's performance.

CLASSIC STUFF Jump inside the finest autos of yesteryear in this racing masterpiece.

ON YOUR OWN There's no co-pilot shouting directions - it's just you against the road.

GRAND PRIX 3: 2000

Grand Prix 3 was a big hit with Formula One fans, but how is the 2000 Season add-on pack going to handle? Check out our in-depth video review to find out. See the new tracks, the 2000 season line up and the new rules and regulations. As a warning: this is an add-on pack, meaning that you'll need the original game to run it, although it doesn't need to be installed on your PC.
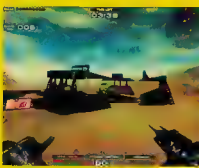

STEADY EDDIE Each driver behaves realistically. Expect Eddie to crash. Lots.

SMART PACK Computer-controlled cars overtake on the outside after a small mistake.

CLUSTERBALL
EXCLUSIVE

It's the sport of the next millennium. Fast aircraft, brutal competition and spectacular crashes! This demo has it all!

GREAT BALLS! Pick up balls and fly them through the hoop to score points. Easy, eh!

Enter the next generation of sporting entertainment. Each contestant has to fly their ship to collect as many balls as possible from around the scenery. As you collect them, they string out behind your craft, reducing your manoeuvrability. Then all you have to do is fly through the stadium hoop to score the points. It would be simple, except that your opponents

can use a variety of weapons to hinder your collections and even steal your prizes before you can get them through the hoop. The single player game is a little weak, but once you've learnt the moves and mastered the sport then take it online as it's here the game really comes together.

MINIMUM SPEC: 233MHz Pentium 64MB RAM

CONTROLS	
Cursors	Flight controls
Mouse	Alter facing
C	Roll
X	Accelerate
Z	Brake
Left CTRL	Super boost
SPACE	Fire
S	Next equip
A	Previous equip
F	Changes target
T	Talk

AVOYD

Avoyd is a revolutionary multiplayer 3D shooter. There's real-time lighting, brilliant particle explosions and full 3D movement and the ability to totally destroy and rebuild the scenery. This demo provides the means to compete with up to 16 players across a LAN. There's no single player game, so make sure you've got some company or there won't be much to shoot at. You'll still be able to build some exciting works of art though!

MINIMUM SPEC: 400MHz Pentium 2 32MB RAM

CONTROLS:	
W	Move forward
S	Move backwards
A	Move left
D	Move Right
Left SHIFT	Move Down
SPACE	Move Up
Left Mouse Button	Fire
Right Mouse Button	Secondary fire (destroys scenery)
Third Mouse Button	Make (creates scenery)
E	Shield toggle

(all keys are user definable)

BUGATRON

It's been a while since you've played space invaders, but now you can drag back all that rose-coloured nostalgia with Bugatron! Fight off wave after wave of bug-eyed aliens as they use

every trick in the book to wipe you out. Shoot them down as they spiral around the screen and then collect the pickups as they drop them. It's a blast from the past, and you'll soon become engrossed in the wonders of an age gone by.

MINIMUM SPEC: 300MHz Pentium 16MB RAM

CONTROLS:	
Cursors	Movement
CTRL	Fire

THE CORPORATE MACHINE

Corporations are in a constant state of war! Planning and plotting to destroy their rivals, conglomerates work towards world domination. This real-time economic strategy game puts you into the middle of the corporate battlefield. Can you build an all-conquering business empire and unlock a fortune? You'll need to be able to connect to Stardock.net to find out.

MINIMUM SPEC: 75MHz Pentium 32MB RAM

CONTROLS:	
Mouse	
F1	Help
F2	Toggles between Site and Main Map
F3	Status Report
F4	Production Screen
F5	Graphs
F6	Research
F7	Marketing

FRONT OFFICE FOOTBALL: THE COLLEGE YEARS

American football management with a difference. Here you assume the role of the head coach of a major college football team. Each year, you'll get the chance to recruit athletes from any of nearly 14,000 public high schools modelled in the game, train them and try to build a winning team in the challenging world of college football. You'll need to become an expert at managing your players (including their study time), the club's finances and your staff.

MINIMUM SPEC: 233MHz Pentium 2 64MB RAM
CONTROLS: Mouse

PROJECT UNDEAD

Everyone likes a spot of zombie-bashing now and again. It's comforting to know that there's always another game involving shotguns and the undead. Project Undead is a simple game that just sticks to the basic principles. Work your way through the levels, picking up weapons and knocking apart the walking dead. As you slowly collect pieces of diaries and notes, you'll gradually gain an idea of the reason for this parasitic plague.

MINIMUM SPEC: 200MHz Pentium 32MB RAM
CONTROLS:

Mouse	Look about
NumPad 8	Run
NumPad 5	Walk
NumPad 2	Walk backwards
NumPad 4 & 6	Turn left & right
NumPad 7 & 9	Lean left & right
NumPad 1 & 3	Strafe
NumPad 0 or Rgt Mouse Button	Jump / Fly
NumPad .	Crouch
NumPad + / -	Zoom with scope
CTRL or Left Mouse Button	Fire
SPACE	Pickup Item
[&]	Cycle through weapons
ENTER	Pickup Item / Use Switch/Item
◄ , ►	Select Item
A / Z	Look up/down
B	Explode Bomb
I	Inventory
T	Crosshair

STAR WRAITH 2

This is a smart little shareware space combat game, putting you in the role of an elite combat pilot. You're employed to fight for the Alliance in

its special operations wing, taking on challenges in the heart of the enemy's territory. With no chance of reinforcement and few resources, your leadership will determine if your squadron survives. If you like the game enough, then you can register online and unlock the arcade action section, along with the mercenary option, giving you much more control over your resources.

MINIMUM SPEC: 300MHz Pentium 64MB RAM
CONTROLS:

1 – 9	Throttle settings in 10% increments
+ / -	Trim throttle setting
T	Switch target
L	MDTS on/off
SHIFT	Fire Missile
CTRL	Fire Guns
I	Adjust power management to Energy bias
J	Adjust power management to Shield bias
Cursors or Joystick	Manoeuvre fighter
/	Roll left / right
TAB	Afterburner
J	Jump Jets
C	Countermeasures
M	Toggle HUD
V	Cycle through camera angles
*/	Zoom in/out whilst in 3rd person mode
A	Order wingmen to attack your target
S	Order wingmen to scatter and attack randomly
D	Order wingmen to defend you
F	Order wingmen to form on your wing
Q	Exit

ULTIMATE RIDE

You've probably seen Theme Park and Rollercoaster Tycoon, but Disney's Ultimate Ride concentrates whole-heartedly on the core subject: roller coasters. The full game will let you build some fantastic rides, with a variety of scenery and materials, and then you can test them all out to see just how heart stopping they really are. To give you a taste of what's to come, you can take some prebuilt rides for a test drive with this nifty little demo.

MINIMUM SPEC: 200MHz Pentium 32MB RAM
CONTROLS:

SPACE	Start Ride
ESC	Quit Ride
1	First Person View
2	Tether View (alongside cars)
3	Cinematic View

WARBIRDS 3

World War Two was a time of heroes, of flying aces, and now you can be one of them. Warbirds 3 provides you

with dozens of authentically modelled aircraft from several countries. Then it's up to you to master each craft and complete all of the offline scenarios. But when you're ready for more of a challenge, then you can sign up to an extensive online community and take your flight training into the real combat arena – dog fighting head-to-head with the best the worlds' armies have to offer.

MINIMUM SPEC: 400MHz Pentium 2 128MB RAM
CONTROLS:

Joystick	Control Plane
F	Fires Primary Guns
B	Fires Secondary Guns
G	Toggle Gear
E	Toggle Engine
O	Flaps Down
W	Flaps Up
K	Elevator Trim Up
J	Elevator Trim Down
V	Zoom In (FOV smaller)
Z	Zoom Out (FOV larger)
X	Auto Trim on Level
Y	Bombardier station
Down Arrow	Activates the Norden if in "Y" mode and plane is so equipped
O	Opens bomb bay doors
=	Ext view zoom in
-	Ext view zoom out
/	Toggle Radio Bar
ESC	Toggle Console
BACKSPACE	Selects next secondary weapon
TAB	Toggles min/max radio buffer
ENTER (three times)	Eject
ENTER (after ejecting)	Opens chute
1	Pilot Station
2	Tail Gunner Station
3	Nose Gunner Station
4	Left Gunner Station
5	Right Gunner Station
6	Top Gunner Station
7	Bottom Gunner Station

ZAX THE ALIEN HUNTER

EXCLUSIVE

Reflexive Entertainment promises a compelling storyline over 22 missions, but we know that we're really here to shoot the bad guys. And shooting bad guys is something that Zax offers in abundance. The hero is originally involved in an effort to grab as much loot as possible, but soon becomes involved in the local problems. This exclusive demo puts you straight into the heart of the action on the Temple of Doom level, faced with swarms of robots, preventing you from finding the sacred sun key. Have you got the brains and brawn to fight your way through to victory?

MINIMUM SPEC: 233MHz Pentium 2 32MB RAM
CONTROLS:

Cursors	Movement
ALT or Left Mouse Button	Fire
Z or Right Mouse Button	Drop mine
R or Mouse Wheel Up	Next weapon
W or Mouse Wheel Down	Previous weapon
M	Toggle minimap
CTRL	Inventory
L	Display log entries
V	Display video recorder
NumPad + / -	Zoom in / out
PAUSE	Pause
C	Deploy companion drone
X	Recall all companion drones
A	Deploy autogun
E	Fire up
D	Fire down
S	Fire left
F	Fire right
ESC	Options menu
F11	Autosave
F12	Autoload

HORROR STORY Edward Camby faces death at every turn in this fourth Alone adventure.

ALONE IN THE DARK: THE NEW NIGHTMARE

The Alone in the Dark series has always been a popular addition to the survival horror genre, and now's your chance to take a look at the fourth outing of this Lovecraftian terror. Join Edward Camby and his companion, Aline Cedrac, as they venture onto the ominously named Shadow Island. Their objective is to recover three ancient tablets but an army of mysterious, evil creatures stands in their way. Can you find out what's going on?

MINIMUM SPEC: 300MHz Pentium 2 64MB RAM
CONTROLS:

Cursors	Move
Space	Action / Fire
Left CTRL	Aim
Left SHIFT	Freelock
A	Run
S	Flashlight
I	Inventory
M	Map
R	Radio

UPGRADES

ANOTHER BATCH OF ESSENTIAL PATCHES AND UPGRADES FOR THE VERY BEST GAMES

AGE OF EMPIRES 2: THE CONQUERORS
- Resolves numerous game balance issues
- 15 new ES Custom Maps
- Two new game types

ARACHNOID – V1.20
- Improves several combat problems
- Seals up gameplay loopholes
- Repaired graphical glitches and system errors

BALDUR'S GATE 2: THRONE OF BHAAL – WIN PATCH V26464
- Solves several problems caused by transition from Shadows of Amn
- Repairs MS Windows registry problems
- Removes "NPC appears busy" bug with Win2K and WinXP

BLACK AND WHITE – PATCH V1.2
- Fixes many problems with the curse in Land Five
- Removes loopholes and glitches from the game system
- Solves many problems relating to playing online
- Allows skipping of introduction

CODENAME EAGLE – V1.41
- 30 players in multiplayer mode
- New Battle Chopper
- New CTF level: Fortress
- Numerous bug fixes, balancing and tweaking

CONFLICT ZONE – PATCH
- Corrects video problems with graphics cards such as Geforce 3
- Repairs music and movie audio issues
- Adds three new sheet codes

CYCLING MANAGER – V1.00.004 PATCH
- Repairs v1.00.003 bug and allows computer to sprint again

DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR – V1.0.8.8
- General maintenance update
- Added command line option: /NOSKINS
- Fixed flagball scoring issue

EDROTEC ... SHADOWHUNTER PART 1 PATCH 1
- Addresses numerous loopholes with mission objective resolution
- Modifies trade screen, PBC rapid fire and multiplayer server systems
- General maintenance update

EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE – V1.07 PATCH 3
- Upgrade to v1.07 standard for online gaming
- Addresses several gameplay and multiplayer issues

FLY? 2 – FEATURE UPDATE PATCH 4
- General bug fix and upgrade to Build 197

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO – V.V PATCH
- Fixes almost all bugs

HALF-LIFE – NOT CLIENT
- Fixed GL texture binding problem (white skin bug)
- Optimised model drawing
- Included Deathmatch Classic
- New automatic update system

HALF-LIFE: COUNTER-STRIKE – V1.1/V1.1 VES
- Fixed GL texture binding problem (white skin bug)
- Optimised model drawing
- Included Deathmatch Classic
- New automatic update system

INSANE – PATCH V.
- Fixes ATI Radeon sky bug
- Simplifies new car skin implementation
- Enables downloadable cars in single player mode
- Modifies multiplayer system settings

JIMMY: IMMORTAL SUPERHEROES – PATCH V1.30
- Adds GameSpy Chat to the connection interface
- Adds the ability to ban players from multiplayer servers
- Provides auto-detection for new versions and patches
- Allows support for official expansions and mods

LORDS OF MIGHT AND MAGIC – V1.3 PATCH
- Fixes several bugs and glitches with multiplayer game and maps
- Adds numerous new server options to multiplayer game
- Cleaned up the Princess's ability to follow the player

OLMEC OF FORTUNE – CLASS B10 PATCH
- Replaces v1.07a patch
- Adds GameSpy support
- Removes WON and repairs problems with dm flags

STAR TREK: STARFLEET COMMAND – ORION PIRATE – SERVER UPDATE
- Updates Starfleet Command Orion Pirates server

SIMS 2 – V20NS TO V23468 PATCH 1
- Resolves numerous gameplay bugs
- Addresses online security and sure server issues

TROPICO – UPDATE V1.30
- Upgrade to v1.03, making it compatible
- Greatly increased editor capabilities
- Fixes for graphical clipping problems and city naming feature

X TREME SOLDIERS – PATCH 1
- Fixes crash bugs
- Upgrades multiplayer options with GameSpy 1.06c
- Standardises LWS system

BUDGET DEMOS

THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND

A-ha, me hearties! Shiver me main brace, you scurvy sea dogs! Who's a pretty boy then? And all that.

Those of you who've seen the previous Monkey Island games will know that this third instalment in the series is nothing less than fantastic. Join Guybrush Threepwood, the mighty pirate (wannabe), as he tries to free himself from the evil demon pirate LeChuck's ghost ship's brig. Meet old friends! Make new ones! Fire mighty cannons! Everything is here that makes Lucasarts the king of adventure games. A definite classic. But you'd better make sure you know your onions, because the Save Game feature has been disabled for this demo.

MINIMUM SPEC: 200MHz Pentium 16MB RAM
CONTROLS:

Hold Left Mouse Button	over object to use Activate "verb coin"
Right Mouse Button	Open inventory

GRIM FANDANGO

Mexican folklore meets Film Noir meets that special brand of Lucasarts adventure gaming in this DVD only demo.

Anyone who's played a Lucasarts adventure game knows that they are amongst the very finest out there, and this is one of its best. Inspired by the Mexican "Day of the Dead" folklore and the Tim Burton film The Nightmare Before Christmas, Grim Fandango takes you into the land of the dead, to help our hero, Manny,

solve a growing mystery. This demo puts you at the start of his problems, faced with the simple task of outwitting some pigeons. Think that sounds easy? Then get your idle bones out there and solve it.

MINIMUM SPEC: 133MHz Pentium 16MB RAM
CONTROLS:

8 or Up Arrow	Move forward
2 or Down Arrow	Move backwards
6 or Right Arrow	Turn right
4 or Left Arrow	Turn left
8	Run
5 or E	Examine item
INS or I	Inventory
4 & 6	Scroll through inventory
ENTER	Put item in hand
+ or P	Pick up item / Return item to inventory
ENTER or U	Use item/ Talk to character
DELETE	Look at next nearby item
PAUSE	Pause
	Skip dialog line
ESC	Skip cutscenes
ALT-X or ALT-Q	Quit game

EXTRAS

- BIOWARE SYSINFO TOOLS
- BLACK & WHITE – OUT TAKES AND MUSIC
- ICEWIND DALE: TRIALS OF THE LUREMASTER EXPANSION PACK
- STARTOPIA RESEARCH TREE
- 3D WW2 2.5 BETA – HALF-LIFE MOD
- MELTDOWN2 V0.65 – TRIBES 2 MOD
- OFFICIAL S.W.A.T. V1.2 – SWAT MOD
- REAL TOURNAMENT – UNREAL TOURN. MOD
- EARN THE FUN – SUDDEN STRIKE FOREVER MAP
- TANK CHARGE – SUDDEN STRIKE FOREVER MAP

UTILITIES

ONLINE SOFTWARE
Wireplay
Gamespy
Shock Machine
Mplayer

DRIVERS
Voodoo Banshee v1.04
Voodoo 4/5 v1.04.00
Voodoo 3 3500 TV Visual Reality kit v1.04.02 (Win 95/98/ME)
Voodoo 3 3500 TV v.1.04.02 (Win 95/98/ME)
Voodoo 3 Windows 2000 v.1.02.00
Voodoo 3 2000/3000 v.1.07.00 (Win 95/98)
Voodoo 2 v.3 03.00

Voodoo 1 v.3.01.00
3Dfx mini OpenGL v.1.47
3Dfx m.ni OpenGL v.1.48
RIVA TNT & RIVA TNT 2
Matrox Power Desk v.6.04.028 for G400
DirectX7 upgrade to DirectX7.a
DirectX6.0

SHAREWARE AND FREEWARE
HyperSnap v.4.1
WinZip v.8
Acrobat Reader v.4.5

PLUG-INS
Flash v.4
Shockwave 8

ON THE DVD

IN ADDITION TO ALL THE CONTENT LISTED ON THE PREVIOUS FOUR PAGES, THOSE OF YOU WHO BOUGHT THE DVD EDITION CAN ENJOY THESE HIGH QUALITY VIDEOS AS WELL.

NEWS

EMPIRE EARTH
Has Age of Empires had its day? Not yet, but this epic real-time strategy looks set to push it all the way.

EMPIRE EARTH

FIFA 2002
A new passing system promises a more refined and sophisticated game akin to ISS Pro Evolution 2 on the PSX.

FIFA 2002

WORLD WAR 3
The developer of our favourite strategy game, Earth 2150, turns its attention to a war closer to home.

WORLD WAR 3

PREVIEWS

EVIL TWIN
Enter the gothic fairytale of the orphaned Cyprien and see what his dark imagination has in store for you!

EVIL TWIN

RED FACTION
Take a look at the game first person shooter fans have been waiting for: the game that lets you wreck the scenery!

RED FACTION

ZANZARAH
Join Amy in the magical world of Zanzarah and discover an ancient mystery and the secret art of fairy combat.

ZANZARAH

NEWS
PREVIEWS
REVIEWS
TRAILERS

SOLUTIONS
METAL GEAR SOLID
NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

REVIEWS

GRAND PRIX 3: 2000 SEASON
Want to know if the 2000 Season add-on is worth it? Find out here.

GRAND PRIX 3: 2000 SEASON

ARCANUM
Can magic and technology combine to make the perfect role-playing game?

ARCANUM

TRAILERS

ANACHRONOX
Come to the ancient city of Anachronox and see just how much trouble Sly Boots can get into.

ANACHRONOX

CIVILIZATION 3
Sid Meier is back doing what he does best, and here's a quick look at his latest empire-building project.

CIVILIZATION 3

CONQUEST: FRONTIER WARS
Having lost a ship through a deep space wormhole, mankind is embroiled in a distant war.

CONQUEST: FRONTIER WARS

INCOMING FORCES
Join the oppressed alien ranks against the invading human forces in this sequel to the 1998 arcade shooter.

INCOMING FORCES

NEED A HAND?

CAN YOU MAKE PC GAMEPLAY EAT ITS WORDS, OR WERE WE RIGHT AGAIN?

Behold the mighty court of Humble Pie: a fine upstanding institution dedicated to bringing the power of free speech to you, the great unwashed. This is the perfect platform for pontificating on why Black & White should be stripped of marks. A forum for grovelling malcontents to come cap in hand, begging for an extra two points on behalf of the much

maligned Blue Shift. If you can persuade Judge Jon Pie that we've marked a game wrongly, we'll amend our original mark, mutter a half-arsed "sorry" under our breath and slope off back to the cellar. Trying his hand on behalf of the People's Revolt Against PC GAMEPLAY this month is Rowland Thomas from Dudley, arguing the case for the real-time strategy epic, Cossacks.

NAME:	**COSSACKS**
REVIEWED:	**ISSUE 11**
ORIGINAL SCORE:	**5**
OVERALL COMMENT:	**"PROVIDES LITTLE IN THE WAY OF INNOVATION OR EXCITEMENT"**

PROSECUTION

Your review of Cossacks in issue 11 was unfair in the extreme! Sure, at first glance the game appears to be an identikit real-time strategy game in the Ensemble Studios mould, but on closer inspection I found a deeply rewarding and thoroughly engrossing title that I'm still playing heavily, some three months on. The 16 nations are far more interesting than those featured in Age of Empires and have a better spread of units and architectural styles. Admittedly the campaigns are linear, but with a random map generator there's literally hundreds of hours of gameplay in there. What's more, the game sold by the bucketload and already has a huge online following. Surely we can't all be wrong? Squeeze it up a couple of marks Judge. You know you want to.

DEFENCE

We're pleased that you found something rewarding within Cossacks, because after hours and hours of laborious slog our reviewer certainly didn't. Point taken about the 16 nations, but this is a cosmetic point, and one that won't mean much to the casual gamer. And a random map generator is fine in principle, but when the actual game is so heavily flawed, what's the point of bothering with it? If we can refer the Judge to the reviewing criteria laid down by the powers that be, then a mark of five is more than apt for this well-intentioned, but poorly executed strategy title. Award Cossacks a mark of seven out of ten and it'll only be one mark behind Call to Power 2 – an infinitely superior strategy title.

JUDGE JON'S VERDICT

You make a convincing case Mr Thomas, but you're on very shaky ground when you start judging games on how many units they shift. Just take a look at Who Wants to be a Millionaire? And despite your carefully word protestations, you've failed to convince me that Cossacks is anything other than a mediocre real-time strategy game for the dyed-in-the-wool military buffs only. I'm going to have to award this one to the defence. The mark stays at five. Court is adjourned.

NEXT MONTH: HOUSE PARTY.

We gave it six out of ten in issue 12 and despite a battering at the hands of the gaming press, it went on to sell thousands. Did we mark it too high or too low? Write in to the usual address. The most eloquent and persuasive argument wins a game of our choice, along with any other tat we can cram in the envelope.

NEXT MONTH

HITMAN 2
FIRST LOOK AT THE SHARP SHOOTING SEQUEL!

MONOPOLY TYCOON: BEHIND-THE-SCENES REPORT ON THE CLASSIC GAME'S NEW LOOK!
POOL OF RADIANCE: NEW RULES, NEW FEATURES, NEW GRAPHICS – SAME GAME?

PLUS! **100-PAGE TIPS BOOK FEATURING A FULL SOLUTION TO MAX PAYNE!**

...and a tooth for a tooth.

Might and Magic...now online, now on LAN

'The Legend continues...fifteen years in the making, the latest chapter has arrived. Travel to distant worlds of epic, fantasy-filled dungeons and bloodstained battlefields.

Battle hundreds of creatures and recover unknown treasures as you strive to be crowned champion. Only those of strong heart, limitless courage and a thirst for adventure will succeed and become true

Legends in the Might and Magic Universe. Legends uses the state-of-the-art LithTech™ 2.0 engine to provide an adrenalin pumping first-person multiplayer gaming experience. Each player controls a single character in a team based adventure taking place via the Internet or LAN.'

The Legend continues.
Play your part.

LEGENDS of Might and Magic™

PC CD ROM

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